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THE

FRIGATE AND THE LUGGER.

CHAPTER I.

THE war with France had just commenced. Vice-Admiral Lord Hood hoisted his flag on board the Victory, of one hundred guns; and, with the English fleet under his command, sailed from Spithead.

Amongst the many midshipmen on board the Victory, were two youths, who will occupy prominent places in our story;—one, William Thornton, our intended hero, was at this period between sixteen and seventeen years of age, and

was known on board the Victory as the Admiral's protegée. He was a high-spirited and generous youth, and had, thus early in life, distinguished himself on several occasions; and was a general favourite; but all that was known of his parentage was, that his supposed father had been formerly Lord Hood's favourite coxswain, and that the Admiral had taken him on board the Victory as one of his midshipmen. Henry Howard Etherton, the other, the younger son of a wealthy baronet, was nearly two years older than William Thornton, but unlike him in every respect, except, perhaps, in personal appearance. He was well-looking, tall, and of gentlemanly manners; he had served two years in another ship, had been four years the schoolfellow of William Thornton, and when he left the school, which he did before William, it was with a feeling of bitter hatred against his schoolfellow, and for no better reason than that he excelled him in mental acquirements, and bodily exercises.

The meeting of the two youths on board the Victory was a surprise to both.

William Thornton was, as we have said, a general favourite, but especially with a fine young fellow, named Saunders, a top-man, whose life he had saved under very trying circumstances.

Howard Etherton took especial care to circulate all he knew of young Thornton's antecedents. He stated that he passed at school as the son of Lord Hood's coxswain; but it was doubtful whose son he was; some one had paid his schooling and other expenses munificently; but that it was too bad, to have as a comrade in the midshipmen's berth, one of so doubtful, at all events, of so low an origin.

Only some of Howard's cronies and toadies listened to these spiteful stories; the officers, perhaps, heard, but gave no heed to them, for the young midshipman was a noble-looking boy, singularly powerful and tall for his age.

One day nearly all the midshipmen happened to be assembled together in their berth, when one of their number, a stout youth of eighteen, who was noted for his envious disposition,

took up a large book, like an account book, saying:

"Gentlemen, I wish to ask your attention for a moment."

Then, turning to William Thornton, he continued with a serious countenance:

"In this book, Master Thornton, we enter the names of our fathers and mothers, as well as of our sisters, provided we have any. Now, ours are all down; pray oblige me with your father's name, and also your mother's maiden name, if you remember such a personage."

William Thornton fixed his dark, expressive eyes upon the speaker with a most unmitigated expression of contempt; but with perfect self-control said:

"You cannot suppose, Master Joshua Dykes, that I am quite so green as to listen seriously to your nonsense. You have been put up to this intended insult by Howard Etherton, who knows remarkably well that I have the misfortune not to know who my parents were; therefore you are weak and silly enough to get this trash

up for the express purpose of provoking me; but—"

"Oh, by St. Peter's toe! and that's a brass one," exclaimed a loud, manly voice, the speaker at the moment entering the midshipmen's berth, "give us your hand, William; I'll be your father and mother, and, faith, your grandmother too, if you're in want of one; you're a broth of a boy, and have shown us what pluck and heart can do. Now, if any of these sky-larking lubbers bother you again with their balderdash, by the powers of Moll Kelly, I'll tache them better manners. Hark ye, my lads! my name, as you all know, is Patrick O'Loughlin, and, as far as I know, I never had a father or mother; but look at this (and clenching his hand he tucked up his sleeve, and stretched out an arm capable of felling an ox); there, this has been my father and mother, and, faith, a whole host of relations beside; it has made me third lieutenant of the Victory; and that's what I call being a father and mother. Now if any of you want to be better acquainted with William Thornton's father and mother, he can show you

just such another fist and arm, and is quite willing to give you a taste of it, to establish his parentage; and now, William, come with me, I want to have half an hour's chat with you."

Most of the mids burst into a hearty laugh, taking the Lieutenant's words good-humouredly, for he was greatly loved by all the officers and crew of the ship. Howard Etherton and two others, his special cronies, sneered, though they evidently did not admire Lieutenant O'Loughlin's father and mother.

William Thornton and Lieutenant O'Loughlin sat down in the latter's berth, with a bottle of light wine and some biscuits before them.

"Now tell me, William," said the kind-hearted Lieutenant, "all you know about yourself. You promised to tell me. We have an idle hour now—to-morrow may see us in action."

"Most willingly, dear friend," replied our hero. "I have no desire to conceal any part of my history, and least of all from you; so now listen to a very short yarn, and then you will know as much as I do myself."

"I was reared in a cottage at Deal, by one of the kindest and most generous of men, and whom I honour and love as a fond father. He was once coxswain to Lord Hood, but, having lost a leg and arm in the service, now lives upon a pension. Shortly after his retirement he was left a comfortable annuity, and persuaded a sister of his—a widow in poor circumstances—to live with him, purchased a pretty cottage on the sea coast near Walmer, where I grew up till I was eight years old.

"I was then sent to one of the best seminaries in the county, where I first met Howard Etherton. I remained at school till I was fourteen years old, when I returned to my supposed father's cottage. He told me I was going to serve His Majesty as a midshipman. I was delighted. One evening the old tar, who was never so happy as when relating sea-yarns, said, 'Bill, my lad, I'll spin you a yarn; mix my grog—there, you're bountiful with the water—sit quiet and listen, for it consarns you.

"'I was aboard the Quebec, 36-gun frigate,

began the old tar, 'commanded by as brave a fellow as ever trod a deck. We were cruising off Ushant, with the Rambler cutter in company. It was the month of October, in the year 177—, we fell in with a large frigate to the sou-west of Ushant, and she had a smart cutter cruising in company. Well, we were soon hammering away at it, and kept it up for three mortal hours. Our decks were slippery with blood, our masts all gone, and our sails, lying over the guns, caught fire, and soon after we blew up, with our colours flying, and—the Lord be merciful to us! —our captain and most of our crew were hurled into the air.

"'I can't say how I got out of her; all I remember is that I found myself struggling in the water amid a mass of rigging and spars. I was finally picked up and carried on board the French frigate Surveillante, where I found several of my shipmates. We were treated with the greatest kindness, by order of the dying commander, who also desired that we should be put aboard the first neutral vessel they came

across, for we had fought gallantly and nobly, and it was not our fault that the ship blew up.

"'The French frigate had suffered awfully; her masts, sails and rigging were cut to pieces; her crew half killed and wounded. We were permitted to walk about the deck. I could speak a little of their lingo, and some of them spoke ours.

"'One morning I saw a little boy, not much more than two years old, toddling about the ship's deck, and, to my surprise, I heard him speak some words in English to one of the men.

"'You may parley-vous to that little chap in your own language,' said one of the sailors, seeing me caress the child—for I was always soft-hearted, and the child took to me at once. 'How did he come here?' asked I.

"'Why,' said the Frenchman, 'about ten days before we fought your frigate, in a heavy gale we ran down a ship in the night; we put out our boats, though it did blow a treble-reefed-topsail breeze, but all we could see was the long boat, and all that we found inside of it was that

child, wrapped up in a heap of blankets. The poor little thing was half dead with wet and cold.' That's all I could learn, but the man said, and I would see it, 'that the child was sure to be a gentleman's son, his little garments were so costly and handsome.'

"Well, after a time jury-masts were rigged and we made way; but a gale drove the frigate ashore on Gros Point, to the lee of Isle Dieu. A scene of terrible confusion ensued, in the midst of which, I, with eight comrades, got off in one of the boats. I took the child with me, for I loved it, and it was English. The next day we were picked up by the ....., 74, commanded by Rear-Admiral Hood, who was proceeding to join the fleet under Admiral Rodney. We were all glad, of course, to join that ship, and be under so gallant and brave a seaman.

"The child became the pet of the ship, he throve like a young bantam, and crowed like one whenever he heard a gun fired.

"The admiral called me on to the quarter-deck, and desired me to say how I came by the

child, and I did so. Before I left the ship I became his coxswain, and to finish my yarn," said Bill Thornton, finishing his grog, "I now tell you you are the child so strangely found on board the Surveillante.

"You may imagine my emotion, O'Loughlin, when I heard this, and how I blessed and caressed the dear old man for the love he had bestowed upon me.

"Now this is all I have to tell you, dear friend; I went to sea shortly after in the ——— frigate as midshipman, and in the course of two years was appointed to this ship through the interest Bill Thornton had with his old commander. The admiral knows I am the same child that used to toddle about the quarter-deck of the ——— 74, when he commanded her, and thus probably feels an interest for me from the peculiarity of my introduction on board his ship, and his esteem for his old and favourite coxswain."

"Here's your health, my lad," said the Lieutenant, tossing down a full glass, "and here's my

hand, I'll be a second father to you. I'm five-and-twenty, and upon my conscience it appears to me I have lived fifty years, or I was in some other person's skin before I got sewed up in this, I've been so knocked about in this world. We are in a glorious service, and if we have luck, why, by St. Patrick, we may advance to be admirals by the time we get to seventy.

CHAPTER II.

In the month of August the British fleet, under Lord Hood, arrived before the port of Toulon. Two commissioners from the Royalist party came on board the Victory, to treat for the surrender of the port and shipping to the British. William Thornton's favorite companion amongst the mids was a youth named Charles Pole, a fine spirited lad of his own age. They were leaning over the bulwarks, gazing at the boats rowing aboard with the two commissioners, and then a look was cast at the bold high land of Cape Cesi, and the entrance to the noble gulf of Toulon.

"I wish they would commence hammering away at those grim looking forts on the heights," said Charles Pole to his comrade, "I'm tired of doing nothing."

"*Il dolce far niente*," said William Thornton, "the Italian's supreme delight, that and serenading his lady love by the light of a bright moon."

"Oh! wait a bit, my beauties," said O'Loughlin, joining them, "you won't talk of the *Dolce far niente* in a day or two, for it's all up with negotiations. We shall have those grim forts talking to us shortly, and faith, I'm longing myself to have a bout with those republican bloodhounds."

O'Loughlin was right in his conjectures. Lord Hood, in great perplexity as to the intentions of the royalist party, resolved upon the hazardous experiment of sending an officer into the town to ascertain how matters stood, being aware that Rear-Admiral St. Julian with the bulk of the French fleet sided with the republicans.

This perilous expedition was confided to the

judgment and courage of Lieutenant Edward Cooke, who was to select a midshipman to accompany him.

"Take Thornton, Cooke," said O'Loughlin, "that's the lad for the work; as courageous as a lion and as cool as a lettuce. Do you remember how he behaved in the affair off Cadiz. If you come back safe, which I predict you will, it will be a feather in his cap."

"The very one I would have selected," said Lieutenant Cooke; "but he's too young to run the gauntlet through the French fleet; it's almost a pity."

To the great delight of Thornton he was selected.

"I think," said Howard Etherton, with a malicious grin, and giving his chum Dykes a poke in the ribs, "I think we shall be one less in our mess by this time to-morrow. I suppose he will leave his kit to you, Pole."

"I hope he will live to break your head yet," said Charles Pole, with a look of contempt as he walked on.

"Thank you, Master Pole; we shall not forget that," bawled out Howard Etherton.

A remarkably fast gig was selected to take the lieutenant and his young companion, and eight picked men, Saunders, the top-man, being one of them. It was ten o'clock at night when the gig left the side of the ship. It was blowing very fresh, and considering the time of year, extremely dark. Our hero was steering.

"Now, William," said the Lieutenant, "keep her away for the high land, yonder; and when we come abreast of the ships steer boldly right into the midst of them."

After entering the harbour our hero could see the light on the dockyard pier plain enough; and he knew from drafts and maps every inch of the outward and inner harbour, whilst the Committee General were aware of the intended attempt to communicate with them.

The boat flew through the water, under the strokes of eight vigorous oars men, and passed close under the stern of a huge hundred and twenty gun ship, which they knew was the Commerce De

Marseilles. There were eighteen or more ships moored in two lines, with a considerable space between, through which the light boat was impelled rapidly, and without even a challenge from any of the ships. It was evidently taken for one of their own boats. William Thornton steered steadily for the jetty, which was known to be in the hands of the royalist party. In a few minutes they were along side the pier, which was crowded with persons of all grades and denominations, the soldiers on duty finding it almost impossible to keep them back. A naval officer came to the side of the boat, and addressed Lieutenant Cooke, saying:

"You have done a daring feat, Monsieur; and, fortunately, you have succeeded. I am desired to let you know that until to-morrow morning you cannot land. It would be dangerous."

"Very good," said Lieutenant Cooke. "We can pass the rest of the night in our boat-cloaks."

"Wine and refreshments," continued the officer,

"shall be sent to you for yourself and men; and I pray you, Monsieur, not to feel aggrieved at this delay; it is unavoidable."

Ere half-an-hour had elapsed a large hamper was handed on board the boat, and then they were told to pull off from the jetty, and make fast to one of the buoys, which they did.

"Come, my lads," said Lieutenant Cooke, "rip up the hamper, and let us feel the contents if we can't see them; we shall not require light to appease our hunger."

William Thornton was delighted with the excitement of the affair They could hear the various sounds from the interior of the town; loud shouts and cries, and all the noises attending the assembly of a number of people in the street; but all was perfectly quiet within the dockyard and basin. Not a boat passed in or out, and the crowd, a while back standing on the jetty, were all put outside the gates, and only the sentries remained, walking backwards and forwards on their watch.

The hamper contained a dozen of wine, a couple of fowls, and a ham, with abundance of bread.

"Well, by Jove, William, this is not bad; I suppose you expected a mess of frogs, or some other outlandish dish, eh?"

"I prefer the half of a fowl, I confess," returned our hero, pulling out his knife to commence operations, "though frogs may not be such a bad dish as we may imagine."

"Oh, confound their frogs!" said the Lieutenant, drawing a cork out of one of the bottles. "By Jupiter, there's neither cup nor glass of any kind."

"Here's a horn, your honour," said one of the men; "I brought it, thinking it might serve a turn somehow if we got anything better than water."

"You're a thoughtful man, Saunders," said the Lieutenant; "hand it here," and giving it a rinse first with water and then with wine, he filled himself a bumper and tossed it off. "Good Bordeaux, by Jove, and no mistake. Come, these fellows know what's good."

"There's a row in the town, Mr. Cooke," said the midshipman; "you can hear them rioting very distinctly."

"Those cursed, blood-thirsty Republicans, trying to cut the throats of the royalists, I suppose," returned the Lieutenant, "and that's the reason they would not let us land, during the tumult. We shall have to remain here till to-morrow night, as we cannot attempt to pass the ships in the broad daylight."

Telling the men to help themselves to the remains of the fowl and ham, and letting them have a couple of bottles of wine between them, a regular watch having been set, the lieutenant and midshipman wrapped themselves up in their boat cloaks, and reclined on the thwarts, conversing together till they dropped off into a short slumber. William Thornton slept an hour or two, and then, waking, sat up; the lieutenant was fast asleep, and so were the men, excepting the two that kept watch. The night was still extremely dark, but as our hero sat gazing over the dark water, looking at the huge dismasted

hulls of some unfinished war vessels, he thought he heard at a little distance a splashing in the water like a person swimming.

"Do you see anything in the water, right ahead, Saunders ?" asked the midshipman to one of the watch, stooping down low as he spoke, and looking along the surface of the water.

"I thought as how I heard a noise, sir," said the man, "and I think I see a dark object moving towards us."

"So do I now," returned William Thornton, "it is a man swimming. Hush! do not make a noise, one man cannot hurt us."

Bill Saunders put down the boat stretcher he had taken up, with the laudable intention of hitting the swimmer over the head, and the next moment a man swam up alongside, stripped all to his drawers, holding up his hand and requesting them to make no noise. He seized the gunnel of the boat, and Saunders and the other men being roused helped him in. The heeling over of the boat rolled Lieutenant Cooke off the thwart, who immediately sprang up, saying:

"Hollo! William, what's in the wind now."

Our hero told him that a man had swam alongside with a letter in his cap for the English officer, and that they had taken him on board. Fortunately both Lieutenant Cooke and Thornton spoke French fluently.

"Well, Monsieur," said the lieutenant, looking at the Frenchman in the dim light, and taking the letter, "I cannot read this till daylight; tell me, if you please, what it is about, and what has induced you to incur so great a risk."

"I have undertaken this adventure, monsieur," returned the stranger, "to serve a most persecuted lady, a countrywoman of yours, and of high rank in this country. She is even now concealed in the vaults of a house in the Rue Province. She escaped from the fearful massacres of Lyons in a miraculous manner, even when brought out with her young daughter to be shot, by order of that infernal monster Collet d' Herbois."

Lieutenant Cooke and the midshipman listened

to the stranger's account with considerable interest, and no little surprise. Our hero had lent the stranger his boat cloak, and given him a small quantity of brandy, and Lieutenant Cooke then said:

"May I ask, Monsieur, who you are, that have so generously periled your life to serve this lady?"

"I was, Monsieur, the Intendant of the husband of Madame la Duchesse, her second husband, who alas! perished with many other loyal noblemen in defending his unfortunate king. Her first husband was an English gentleman of the name of Arden, perhaps you may know the name, the Duchess's daughter is by her first husband."

"The Ardens are an old and wealthy family," said Lieutenant Cooke, "but I do not know them. I should be delighted to serve this unfortunate lady and her daughter, but you see, I am now employed upon a most important mission, and dare not depart from my instructions or take part in any private affair. Nevertheless, some effort must be made to rescue this lady, but

could she not trust herself to the royalist party in Toulon; they are strong, are they not?"

"No, in truth, Monsieur, they are not, as I fear the result will shew. Madame la Duchesse is, I am satisfied, closely sought after. She trusted herself to the royalists of Lyons, and would, but for my assistance, have perished. Once known to be in Toulon, she would be sacrificed long before she could be got on board the British fleet."

Lieutenant Cooke thought for a moment, and then said:

"To-morrow morning I am to meet the committee-general, respecting the surrender of the town and ships. If the town is given up Madame and her daughter will be instantly placed in safety. But as this may not happen, could not you, Monsieur, conduct this young gentleman," putting his hand on the midshipman's shoulder, "to-morrow morning to where Madame is concealed. He may be able, by conversing with her, to plan some method of getting her and her daughter to the sea-shore of the outer har-

bour by to-morrow night, for we cannot leave in the day time, and thus as we pass out we may be enabled to take them on board."

"That is a very good idea of yours, Monsieur," said the Frenchman; "therefore, if this young gentleman comes on shore to-morrow morning, I will secretly watch for his landing, and as you all proceed through the streets to the Committee-General's, I will contrive to attract his attention; then if he will follow me at a short distance, I will introduce him to Madame."

"Very good," said William Thornton, "I will keep a sharp look-out for you, and if you hold up your hand it will be sufficient.'

"How far have you to swim?" questioned Lieutenant Cooke.

"Not very far, Monsieur," said the stranger; "there is no boom across the basin, and once outside, I can land where I left my garments."

The Frenchman thanked the Lieutenant for his courtesy, slipped over the side, and noiselessly made his way through the still waters of the basin, and was soon lost to sight.

CHAPTER III.

After the departure of the Frenchman, Lieutenant Cooke and William Thornton commented upon what they had just heard.

"I forgot to ask the stranger," remarked the lieutenant, "the lady's present title; he called her Madame la Duchesse. Her former name, at all events, was Arden."

"I dare say," said the midshipman, "the note he presented will explain, and perhaps give some further particulars of her situation."

"True, I forgot the note; there will be day-

light in another hour, it's getting grey to the eastward. A terrible scene this poor lady and her child must have witnessed in Lyons," continued the lieutenant, "the atrocities committed there by that fiend, Collet de Herbois exceeds all human belief. That wretch found the guillotine too slow for his blood-thirsty soul; he had the unfortunate people of Lyons actually shot down by cannon, loaded with grape shot, hundreds at a time. He even undermined the streets, and blew up the houses with gunpowder,* tied his victims to trees, and shot them down like wild beasts. In five months this detestable monster slaughtered six thousand persons."

"What extraordinary infatuation," exclaimed our hero. "I can scarcely understand human beings becoming so suddenly seized with such a thirst for blood."

Lieutenant Cooke, finding the daylight rapidly increasing, became curious to examine his letter. It was addressed in a female hand writing:

* Fact.

"TO THE ENGLISH OFFICER IN COMMAND OF THE VICTORY'S BOAT."

Opening the letter, he read its contents in a low voice to William Thornton:

"SIR,—

"Hearing that a boat from the British Admiral's ship, was lying in the Dock basin, inspired me with the hope of being rescued from the perilous situation in which, with my daughter, I am placed. I am a native of England, and the widow of the late Duke de Coulancourt. My first husband, the father of my little girl, was the Honourable James Somers Arden. My anxious desire is, if possible, to get on board one of the British ships, hoping thus to be able to reach England. If, therefore, any assistance can be rendered me, I shall for ever pray for the welfare of those to whom my gratitude will be due; you may implicitly trust Monsieur Jean Plessis, the bearer of this; he can give you every information.

"ANNE COULANCOURT.
"NEZ DE BRACEY."

"Well, William, you must do your best, and try and see this poor lady and her little girl," said Lieutenant Cooke. "If they could manage to get on the beach to the eastward of the shipping, along which we pass to get clear of the harbour, we might readily pick them up. I do not know the locality myself, but Monsieur Plessis I dare say knows how to get them there. Now let us pull in for the quay, I see a number of persons assembled; and there goes a signal for us. Be very cautious, William, how you act, get back to the boat as soon as you can; Saunders will keep a good look-out for you, and haul off from the quay till he sees either you or me. Now, my lads," added the Lieutenant, "pull in for the pier."

On reaching the pier, they found the Commissioners and several naval officers, in full uniform, waiting to receive them. As Lieutenant Cooke leaped on shore, followed by our hero, two of the Commissioners advanced and offered many apologies for leaving them in their boat all night. The tumultuous assemblies in the town was the

cause. Breakfast was prepared for them in a mansion near the dock gates, after partaking of which, they would conduct Lieutenant Cooke before the constituted authorities, to hear his proposals. Accordingly, they all went through the dock gates, a vast concourse of people of the very lowest grade were assembled outside, and various cries and violent vociferations saluted their ears. There were royalists and republicans, Jacobins and Girondists, all furious and excited; nevertheless, they proceeded unmolested to the house where breakfast was prepared for them; after which, accompanied by more than twenty gentlemen and officers, Lieutenant Cooke arrived at the chamber, where the Commissioners sat awaiting them.

"Be cautious, and take care of yourself, William," whispered the Lieutenant as the mid-shipman dropped into the rear, without being particularly noticed, for the crowd rushed eagerly after Lieutenant Cooke and his escort, Thornton walked quietly on, attired in a plain jacket and trousers, without any marks of a

naval uniform on them; his dirk he left in the boat purposely, but he carried a brace of small pistols in his pockets.

As the crowd rushed on, William Thornton found himself proceeding up a narrow street, when he suddenly felt a hand laid upon his arm. The man who had touched him passed on, but turning round, looked him in the face with a peculiar expression on his features.

"That is our friend of last night," thought the midshipman, and he followed him at a little distance. The man presently turned down a deserted side street, for almost the entire population of the town were assembled before the hall where the Committee General sat; an intense state of excitement existing, for it was then known that General Castenau, the fierce republican General, was before Marseilles, and this created a fearful panic amongst the royalists, and a source of fiend-like rejoicing with the bloodthirsty republicans. Following the stranger through several bye-streets, he suddenly dived beneath an arch, making a sign to our hero to be

quick after him. William Thornton did not delay, and passing under the arch he found himself in a very small court with his guide standing before the door of an apparently deserted house.

"This is fortunate, Monsieur," said the man, "the streets, you see, are totally deserted; no one, I think, saw us enter this court."

Unlocking the door, they traversed a dark, damp passage. Pushing open a side door, they entered a small room, totally unfurnished, the light being admitted through a half-open shutter.

"Please to stay here a few minutes, Monsieur," said Jean Plessis; "I will get Madame up from the vaults into another room, where she usually stays when I am in the house to watch. When I am absent she and her daughter keep below—their place of concealment would not be easily discovered."

"Poor lady!" said William Thornton; "what a state for one of her rank to live in. But are there not many Royalist families in the town

not forced to live in such a state of concealment?"

"Yes," said Jean Plessis, "but there is only one Duchesse of Coulancourt. Collet de Herbois would give ten thousand francs for her head. There are many of his spies here, and will soon track me. There will be more blood spilt here than even in Lyons."

He then departed.

"That is very odd," thought the midshipman. "With a magnificent British and Spanish fleet before the town, surely, if the Admiral pleases, he could take the town and fort at any time, and drive these horrid Republicans into the sea."

William Thornton was a young reasoner; he did not know that there were wheels within wheels in politics; that, with the finest fleet in the world, it was sometimes the policy of ministers to do nothing with it. As it turned out, however, the fleet did get possession of the fort and the town, but only to abandon it and its wretched inhabitants afterwards, to one of the most fearful massacres on record.

Our hero remained waiting for the return of Jean Plessis, wondering in his heart how the unfortunate Duchesse de Coulancourt and her daughter could dwell in so desolate and unwholesome a place.

In less than half-an-hour the Frenchman returned, saying:

"I am sorry to have kept you, young gentleman, in so dismal a chamber; but Madame is now ready to receive you. Please to follow me."

Our hero followed Jean Plessis through two or three dismal corridors and chambers, till, opening a door, he ushered him into a room, partly furnished. There were two windows to the apartment, but only the top part of the shutters was kept open. As he entered the chamber—a little bashful, perhaps, for he was but seventeen, and but little accustomed to female society—he perceived a lady in deep mourning rise from a chair and advance to meet him; but he was more surprised when, instead of a fair young girl, as he expected to see, he observed a

slight, fragile boy, with a pale and very thin face, but with eyes dark, large, and lustrous. He appeared about twelve years of age, and stood leaning against the high-backed chair of his mother.

The Duchesse slightly started as she gazed up into the handsome, expressive features of the midshipman. For a moment she appeared to be reflecting, as if some past transaction was recalled by his presence.

"Ah!" said the lady, in French, speaking in a low voice, "he is young, very young;" but then, looking up, with a sweet smile on her pale but very beautiful features, she said, in English:

"Pardon me, young gentleman, instead of wondering at your youth, I ought to have expressed my gratitude at seeing one so young willing to incur so much risk in his desire to befriend a perfect stranger."

"But nevertheless, Madame," said the young sailor, "a countrywoman. Lieutenant Cooke, my superior officer, would most willingly have come in my place, but that he was forced to

attend a most important meeting with the Royalist committee. He, however, bade me say that any assistance he can offer you, will be a pleasure, and that perhaps you, Madame, would be able to point out to me how that assistance can be rendered."

The Duchesse de Coulancourt seemed to reflect for a few moments, during which time our young midshipman had an opportunity of regarding her features and person, and also that of the young boy, looking so earnest and pensive beside her. The Duchesse was tall, graceful in figure, and, though exceedingly pale and thin, her features were beautifully formed. Like the boy, her eyes were black, large, and expressive; with luxuriant black hair; and in years, as well as he could judge, not more than five or six and thirty. The boy was of a slight figure, dressed in the tunic and vest then worn by boys of his age; he had the same fine features as the mother, but his excessive thinness and palor gave him a consumptive appearance, which was only relieved by the singularly expressive look

about the eyes, and the beautifully marked eyebrows.

"I have been thinking all the morning," said the Duchesse, rousing herself from her thoughts, "how to act in the painful and trying situation in which I am placed; for no human power could save me were I recognised, or known to be living in this town. Not even to the Royalist party would I venture to show myself, unless, indeed, the British Admiral ultimately gains possession of the town. My chief desire is to secure the safety of my beloved daughter. Come hither, Mabel. I have disguised her, as you see, like a boy. Poor child! she is so attenuated by fretting, confinement, and various other privations, that she appears a mere shadow."

Madame Coulancourt turned and took her disguised daughter by the hand, the child's pale face slightly flushed as she saw that William Thornton's dark eyes were fixed upon her, with an expression of deep interest and surprise. The midshipman thought her plain, even with her large speaking eyes.

The Duchess sighed, and the tears ran down her cheeks as she kissed her daughter's forehead, and then taking her hand, she said:

"Mabel, this young gentleman will be a brother to you. Pray what is your name?" she added, as our hero took the little hand in his and stooped and kissed her forehead, with the dark hair cut close all round like a boy's. "I know not how it is, but I feel a strange spirit of prophecy creeping over me, that tells me you will serve this poor child, who is, as it were, alone in the world. You have a strong likeness, young sir, to some one I dearly loved, but memory is almost dead within me. You will protect my child, I know you will!"

"On my soul, Madame," returned William Thornton, with his eyes kindling with all the fire and romance of his enthusiastic disposition; "on my soul, Madame, I will do all I can; willingly peril life if necessary to be of service to you or this dear little girl."

The child pressed his hand to her lips, and her eyes full of tears were lifted to his, as she said:

"And Mabel will always be a sister to you, and love you with all her heart." Prophetic words to her, which were never forgotten. "I had a brother once," she added; and shuddering she said in a low broken voice, "but they killed him."

Madame Coulancourt drew her daughter towards her; she was weeping, but checking her feelings and her painful remembrances of terrible moments, now passed, she looked up, saying:

"It is wrong thus to waste valuable time, by giving way to recollections of events that cannot be recalled. This morning I made up my mind how to act, after consulting with Monsieur Jean Plessis. This faithful friend of my unfortunate husband saved my life and my child's life, risking not only his own existence, but the safety of a wife and child dear to him. He was Monsieur le Duke's Intendant and then mine; but he is a man of good family, and at one time had considerable property. But like many alas! in this land, stripped of all—of everything—save his noble devotion to me and mine. He procured these

garments for my little girl, and agreed with me in my intention of confiding her to the care of the English officer, who was expected from the admiral's ship. Dressed thus, she may more easily pass through the town with you and thus gain the boat, and to-night Monsieur Plessis says he is pretty certain he will be able to get me disguised to the beach of the outer harbour, where there is a ruined quay that juts out into the sea; and where, as you row along shore in your boat, you may be able to take me in without attracting observation. Still I prefer my little girl going with you, because I am sure it will ensure her escape from this land of misery. Whereas a few hours hence—nay, the very result of the meeting now taking place—may rouse a furious bloodthirsty mob into sedition and outrage, for there are a hundred of the followers and spies of the atrocious Collet de Herbois in the town at this moment, leading the easily excited lower order into revolutionary excesses."

"Your daughter will be quite safe in the boat, Madame," said the midshipman earnestly, "and

I know that every protection will be afforded her when we reach the Victory. Perhaps, Madame, if you make the attempt you will succeed in getting safely to the boat now, whilst the mass of the people surround the council chamber."

"No! no!" said the Duchess sadly, "the risk of being recognized in broad daylight by some of the spies of de Herbois would be too great. Ah! young sir, if you only knew a hundredth part of the horrors and sufferings this dear child and I went through whilst in the power of those monsters, who rule this once fair land, you would, like us, shudder at the very idea of again falling into their hands. Attired as my child is, she will escape notice walking by your side, whereas should an agent of de Herbois recognise me, we should be both lost."

Madame Coulancourt then rose and took from a table a casket; closing the lid as she placed it beside our hero, and locking it with a very peculiar key. It was a work of foreign manufacture, and beautifully clasped with silver, chased.

"I wish you also, Master Thornton," continued Madame Coulancourt, "to take charge of this casket, for should it be the will of Heaven that I should be unable to rejoin my child—"

"Ah! mamma," passionately interrupted the young girl, throwing her arms round her mother's neck and weeping violently, "what words are those? No! no! I will not leave you, whatever peril you incur, your own Mabel will share it with you, and you shall not hear me murmur."

"But, my beloved child," said the mother soothingly, "even Jean Plessis himself says he would not be able to take us both to-night to the beach. You could not surmount the difficulties of the way. Besides your presence would render us remarkable going through the gates; he has only a pass for two."

Thus the mother soothed her little girl, shewing her how necessary it was for the salvation of both that she should put herself under the care of the young midshipman. After a time Mabel Arden allowed herself to be persuaded.

William Thornton also talked to and soothed

the child, and she looked so confidingly on him, and appeared to feel his kindness to her, so much that he vowed in his heart to suffer death sooner than Mabel should be injured whilst under his care.

"I was saying," said the Duchess, rewarding our hero with a sweet affectionate smile, "that I wish to confide this casket to your charge till we meet again. In it there are important letters and papers respecting my daughter and her relatives in England, who will at once acknowledge and receive her. There are also a few jewels of value, and money; but I trust in God we shall be able to join you to-night in the boats. At what hour do you suppose you will leave the dock basin?"

"Perhaps, after ten o'clock, madame; it was very dark last night, when we passed through the shipping, and as there is no moon it will be nearly as dark to-night; or at all events, it will be only star light. You ought, madame, to be provided with a dark lantern to

show a light when you hear the noise of our oars, as we row along shore."

"No doubt Jean Plessis will provide one," said Madame De Coulancourt, "but you will remember the ruined quay; he says you cannot mistake the spot, as it is the only erection of the kind on that line of beach. I trust I am not detaining you too long," said the Duchess, "I have now said all I have to say; so come, my beloved child, embrace me once more, and then I will confide you to the care of your young protector, whom may God prosper and preserve!"

Mabel threw herself into her mother's arms; again and again she kissed her passionately, whilst the tears streamed down both mother's and daughter's cheeks.

William Thornton was considerably affected at witnessing the suffering the separation caused Mabel and the Duchess. He spoke some kind and assuring words to the little girl, and what he said appeared to abate her grief. Madame De Coulancourt then put a boy's cloak over her

shoulders, and a cap on her head, and then summoned Jean Plessis, who kept watch without. This faithful friend of the Duchess De Coulancourt was a tall and highly respectable looking man, in years, scarcely forty, with a fine and expressive countenance. For several moments he conversed with our hero, respecting the place at which they were to meet that night; he described the inner and outward harbour accurately, and the best way for Lieutenant Cooke to steer on leaving the basin that night, and then covering the casket with a cloth cover, William Thornton took it under his care, remarking to himself that it was for its size uncommonly heavy.

"I shall go on before you, Monsieur," said Jean Plessis, "till I bring you in sight of the dock gates. Should you by chance be questioned as to who the boy is with you, say your superior officer ordered you to take him with you, and that he is an English lad; they will not attempt to stop you."

Madame De Coulancourt was greatly agitated on parting. She embraced William Thornton as

she would had he been her son, and drawing a ring from her finger, begged him to heep it in remembrance of her. Our hero was greatly impressed; he was beginning very early, indeed, to be a protector to a young girl, scarcely three years his junior, but he felt proud of the confidence placed in him, and interested beyond measure. Taking the weeping and trembling Mabel by the hand they passed out from the house, Jean Plessis going first to see that all was clear, then making a sign to William Thornton they all three proceeded down the street.

CHAPTER IV.

It became very apparent to our hero, after traversing one or two streets, that there was some great commotion going on in other parts of the town, for the shouts and outcries from the distance were deafening. As yet they had passed but few persons, and those seemed all to be hurrying in one direction.

Toulon at this period contained nearly five thousand inhabitants within its walls; three parts of this population were Republicans, and so were the bulk of the fleet. Jean Plessis led the way some distance a head, when suddenly, in turning the corner of a street, they encountered a mob,

swearing and shouting furiously, and to the great astonishment of William Thornton he perceived that a large body of the people surrounded Lieutenant Cooke and a few of the Committee, and were evidently bent upon obstructing their path to the dock gates, which were now in sight. In a moment the young man and his terrified charge were pushed out of the road, and the next instant became mingled with the riotous mob they had so unfortunately stumbled upon. Still holding Mabel by the hand, the midshipman, a resolute and strong youth for his age, sturdily strove to gain the side of Lieutenant Cooke* and the Commissioners, who were arguing with the mob; but just then a ferocious looking man, with his neck and throat bare, no coat on his back, but with an apron and a butcher's knife tied round his waist, suddenly clutched our hero by the collar, in a terrible grip, spluttering out:

"Ah, cursed aristocrat Anglais, what are you doing with this boy?"

* Lieutenant Cooke was arrested in the streets of Toulon by the mob, but was in the end allowed to proceed to his boat.—*James's Naval History.*

Without a moment's hesitation William Thornton drew a pistol from his pocket, cocked it, and putting it close to the man's head, said:

"Let go, ruffian, or you are a dead man!"

The surly villain let go his hold with a horrid oath, and the midshipman, catching his young and terrified companion round the waist, burst through the startled group surrounding him, and the next instant was by Lieutenant Cooke's side, just as a large body of the Committee and a Royalist guard of marines came up to protect the British envoy.

"Is that you, William?" said the Lieutenant, astonished. "Put up your pistol; do not let them see you armed. What boy is this?"

"I will tell you, sir, when we get to the boat; but push on for the dock gates, they are getting furious. See that tall ruffian—I should like to shoot him—is exciting the mob."

"How blood-thirsty you are, William," said the Lieutenant, and then turning to some of the Commissioners, he urged their getting within the

dock gates as soon as possible. The marines cleared the way, and in a few minutes they were safe within the gates, but not before the huge butcher, struggling through the crowd, had aimed a large brick with violence at our hero, shouting out:

"Take that, cursed aristocrat! I will have your head one of these days!"

The missile missed its intended mark, but knocked down one of the Commissioners in front. William Thornton would have shot the fellow instantly, but Lieutenant Cooke pushed him inside the gate with his little charge, saying:

"By Jove, you *are* a hot-headed boy; your impetuosity must be restrained!"

The great gates of the dock-basin being closed, kept out the mob, and the party proceeded quietly along the jetty.

"I fear, Mabel," said the Midshipman, stooping and looking into the little pale face of his charge, "all this has frightened you very much."

"Yes," said the child, in her quiet sweet voice,

"but I am more frightened about mamma; and, awhile ago, I thought more of you, when that horrid man seized you, than of myself."

"Well, please God, Mabel, your mamma will join us to-night. At all events, all danger to you is over, there is our boat yonder pulling in for the jetty."

Lieutenant Cooke, taking our hero by the arm, said in a low voice:

"Well, how did you get on, and who is that delicate looking boy?"

"This is the Duchess De Coulancourt's little girl," returned William Thornton. "We shall take the Duchess up on the beach to-night as we go by; but I will tell you all when I get on board. What occurred at the meeting?"

"A precious row, my lad; I thought at one time we should all have had our throats cut. However, in the end, they signed a declaration, agreeing to our Admiral's proposal, so all we have to do is to get back to our ship, and I suppose in a day or so we shall be in possession of the town or port."

On board one of the dismasted craft in the basin, provisions and all kinds of drinkables were prepared for the English officers and the crew of the gig, and thither they all proceeded, with several naval officers of the Royalist party. No one seemed to notice the child, whether they thought he came in the boat with them or not, William Thornton could not say; but, leaving the Lieutenant to entertain the French officers, the Midshipman and his protegée sat down in one of the private cabins of the frigate, and Bill Saunders brought them a share of the repast from the main cabin.

Mabel recovered her spirits a little when our hero told her that the Royalists would hold possession of the town, and that the British fleet would sail into the port in a day or two, so that there would be no fear of her mamma, even if she was not able to join them that night.

"Ah!" said the little girl, "but what will become of me, in this horrid dress, if she does not? Are there any females on board your ship?"

"No, Mabel, there are not (luckily, he added to himself, or adieu to discipline); but if by any chance your mamma should be prevented joining us, I will take you on board the Thetis; Captain Timmin's wife and daughters are there. They are going in a day or two to Genoa; they will, I am sure, take great care of you for a night or two."

"Oh! dear William," said the child, anxiously clasping his hand in hers, "do not let me go from you; put me in any corner near you; I won't mind wearing this dress for a day or two, but do not send me amongst strangers. I look upon you as a brother now."

Our hero promised all he could promise, but he recollected that, after all, he was but a midshipman, and one without rank or station, and entirely depending on his own exertions. However, he tried to keep up the poor girl's spirits, and, by chatting to her, keep her from fretting.

"How long, Mabel," questioned young Thorn

ton, "were you confined in that dismal house I found you in?"

"Oh, nearly—let me see—yes, fully a month; sometimes in the dismal vaults. When good Jean Plessis was out getting food we always went below, and he closed the trap down over us. Oh, how damp and chill it was; but we were well wrapped up in blankets, and he never staid away more than an hour or two at most."

"I think I heard your mamma say she escaped from Lyons, and that you suffered much there?"

"Oh, you can't think what we endured! You must know we were living in a very grand chateau, belonging to mamma's husband, the Duke de Coulancourt, who, alas! was beheaded in Paris, for fighting for the poor king. Oh, my poor mamma, when Jean Plessis came from Paris with the frightful intelligence, lost her senses. My brother, dear brother Julien, was furious and distracted. He was only fifteen; he wanted to go to Paris, but Jean Plessis said

we must fly or we should perish, for the order was to arrest all the Duke's family. But, alas! mamma was not able to fly; we moved into Lyons, thinking to be safer there, as they were all Royalists. I am not able to tell you all mamma suffered whilst there; she will tell you herself, another time. I am now so frightened and anxious about her that I can scarcely recollect anything."

Thus the remainder of the day passed, till Lieutenant Cooke's entertainers, officers and all, quitted the ship, leaving the English officer to make his daring passage through the hostile fleet.

"Now, William, tell me all about your adventure," said Lieutenant Cooke to his young companion—little Mabel being fast asleep in a berth, worn out by fatigue and great anxiety, with the casket placed at her feet.

William Thornton made his superior officer fully acquainted with all that had occurred, and explained the manner in which they were to take the Duchesse de Coulancourt on board.

"By Jupiter!" returned Lieutenant Cooke, looking surprised, and not a little puzzled, "you are a young hero, William, for an adventure with Royalist Duchesses and Republican ruffians, and all of a sudden to become the protector of a young girl and a valuable casket. Faith, it's a very curious affair. What shall we do if circumstances prevent us pulling along the beach where we may expect to find this unfortunate lady? We may be suspected by some of the nearest men of war, and, if so, the whole bay along that beach is exposed to their fire. Supposing we fail in rescuing the mother, what in the name of fate is to be done with this poor little child? A girl, too, on board a ship with above a thousand sea bears in her—nice nurses for a delicate child, eh?"

"I was thinking," said the Midshipman, "if, as you say, we miss the mother, that she might be received by Captain Timmins' lady and daughter. They are on board the Thetis frigate, which is going to Genoa. The Captain's wife and daughters are to land at Malta, I understand."

"Faith, may be Captain Timmins would not be very much obliged to you for troubling his good lady with the care of such a delicate little girl as the poor thing asleep there."

"She is only delicate from suffering and privation," said William Thornton; "besides, she belongs to a good English family, who will receive her most willingly; and who knows what's in this casket—the Duchess said there were jewels of value."

"Well, by Jove! my lad," said the good-humoured Lieutenant, "you are standing up stoutly for your young *protegée*. However, there's no use imagining disasters that may not occur. Her mother may be rescued, and, if not, we must do our best for the child, and try to get her to England. Now I think of it, there are two transports returning to England, at anchor outside, and lots of women on board one of them, so, at least, I heard. However, let us get ready for a start; it's nearly time, so wake up your little charge."

It was nearly eleven o'clock ere the boat left

the basin to return to the Victory. Mabel Arden, carefully muffled in a boat cloak, and keeping as close to her young protector as she dared, was extremely anxious, and won upon the good-nature of Lieutenant Cooke by her gentle, affectionate manner, and sweet, interesting face. It was a very still, fine night, but fortunately much overcast. Having passed out into the inner harbour, the men pulled steadily and without speaking a word, till they cleared the dangerous vicinity of some of the vessels of war anchored near the dock basin. Without being challenged they gained the outward harbour, avoiding the line of heavy ships anchored in double rows. William Thornton kept the boat away from the shore, as there is no tide in Toulon harbour, or in the Mediterranean, of more than a few inches, and that merely caused by peculiar gales of wind, they were able to row close along the beach. It was scarcely possible to distinguish objects on the shore, so, for fear those they expected might miss them, a dark lantern was opened, with its light towards

the beach. They could distinctly distinguish the huge hulls and masts of the nearest men of war, several of them not being more than a couple of hundred of yards from them. As they pulled slowly along, they suddenly beheld a bright light ashore; it was held up for a moment only, and then all became dark again, but at the same moment a hail from the nearest ship came over the still waters.

"Pull in, my men," said the Lieutenant. "By Jove! we are seen, and shall have a shot next."

The next moment the boat's keel touched the beach, close beside a ruined quay. A man came forward. The midshipman knew him at once; it was Jean Plessis. Mabel threw off her cloak, exclaiming eagerly, in French:

"Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Where is mamma, Monsieur Jean Plessis?"

The man sprang into the boat, saying: "Make way out of the harbour, Monsieur; we are betrayed. I will explain,—ha! there goes a gun." The same moment a ball struck the

ruined wall, some four paces from them; knocking a heap of rubbish about, and covering them with a cloud of splinters.

"Push off. By Jove! that's close shaving," said Lieutenant Cooke; "and give way with a will."

On flew the light boat, and again a flash, and a prolonged report pealed over the water, the shot drenching them with spray, as it actually bounded over them, and tore along the beach afterwards; but, vigorously urged along by the hardy crew, they turned a long projecting point of high rock, that effectually sheltered them from further danger. The agonised Mabel, bursting into tears, implored Jean Plessis to say what had become of her mother.

"My poor child," said the Frenchman, with great feeling in voice and manner, "don't be alarmed; there is no fear of the Duchess's life, but they have carried her off."

"Oh, my God! I shall never see mamma again. Why, why did I leave her? If they have taken her away they would have taken me too."

"How has this occurred?" said Lieutenant Cooke, while the midshipman strove to soothe the weeping girl.

"I will tell you, Monsieur," said Jean Plessis, "and then you must put me on shore, for I will never cease till I trace Madame to where her enemies have taken her. She has not been, I feel certain, carried off by the revolutionary party, but by private enemies, who have contrived to track us to Toulon."

"Why do you think that, Monsieur Plessis?" asked Lieutenant Cooke.

"I will tell you, Monsieur," replied the Frenchman. "We had scarcely passed the gates, and were making the best of our way to gain the appointed spot—the ruined quay—when from behind a low hedge half a dozen men sprang out. I was instantly knocked down by a blow from the butt end of a carbine, and rolled into a ditch. I was quite sensible, but remained still. They had seized the Duchess, she did not scream nor attempt to fly. I then heard one of the men

say, 'Bring up the Berlin;' the next moment a caléche with two horses came out from behind the hedge through a gateway. Madame was put inside, and then the same man said: 'Parbleu! I forgot, have you finished that fellow Plessis? Do not leave him to be hunting us out, I pray you; it's bad enough to lose the little girl.' As soon as I heard these words I crept along the ditch, and fled as fast as I could to save those villains the trouble of knocking me on the head."

"Have you any idea," said Lieutenant Cooke, "who these ruffians are?"

"I suspect they are employed by a kinsman of the late Duke and next heir, who would have inherited the property, had not the Duchess's husband some five years ago made over the whole of his property to her, having had the power to will it to whom he pleased. This kinsman's name is Ganel-Maria Montaut. He will not bring the Duchess to the guillotine, because if she loses her life the estates will be seized by the nation. Collet d' Herbois would destroy her

from motives of hatred and vengeance, she having scorned his daring proposals, after her husband's death."

"Then what do you think the best to do with this poor child?" questioned William Thornton anxiously, as the keel of the boat grounded upon a shingly beach.

"Get her as soon as possible to England, where she has wealthy relatives," said Jean Plessis, "and God will reward you. The Ardens are of good family; besides, there are jewels of great value in that casket you have. As to me, I will never cease till I trace Madame la Duchesse, and if I can I will communicate with Mademoiselle Arden hereafter in England."

So saying he took the weeping girl in his arms and kissed her affectionately, and then laying his hand on William Thornton's arm, said emphatically:

"Never desert this little girl whilst you have life and power to assist her," the next moment he sprang on shore, waved his hand, and disappeared in the obscurity of the night.

Mabel burst into a flood of tears, and putting her little arms round young Thornton's neck, exclaimed:

"Oh! my mother! my poor mother; shall I never see her again. But you—you will not desert poor Mabel!"

William Thornton kissed the cold cheek of the little girl, for whom he already felt the affection of a brother, saying:

"Do not give way to grief, Mabel; God, who has protected you through such perils, will protect you now, and restore your dear mother to you. Call me brother, for I will shew you all the affection a brother can."

"Well, upon my honour," said the lieutenant, "if this is not a romance I know not what is. Give way, my lads, give way, and let us get on board, and thank our stars that one of those round shot did not stop our logs."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Bill Saunders pulling the stroke oar, and making the tough ash bend to his powerful arm, whilst muttering to himself, "yes, blow me if I wouldn't be a father to the little thing myself."

CHAPTER VI.

In less than an hour the boat ranged up alongside of the huge Victory, towering above them in the dim light like a mighty fortress, her lofty masts being clearly defined in the clear blue sky. Mabel was in trembling agitation as to what would be done with her, her little heart beating with anxiety.

"You cannot take this child away to-night," said Lieutenant Cooke to our hero, "you had better place her under the care of the steward, he is a steady, middle-aged man, and very kind hearted. He will put her in his own berth, and

to-morrow I will speak to the Admiral about her. It's a strange adventure altogether."

They ascended the side of the ship, Bill Saunders carrying Mabel in his arms as tenderly as an infant. The next moment the little girl found herself standing on the deck of the Victory.

The sight of this monstrous ship, her huge masts towering to the sky, the lights here and there flashing from the battle lanterns, shewed to the astonished child many incomprehensible things. The groups of hardy tars hovering round filled the mind of the young girl with awe, and trembling and dismayed she grasped her young protector's arm, and gazed up into his face with her large intelligent eyes, so full of all her little heart felt, that William Thornton began to feel almost as much as she did.

Lieutenant Cooke returned with the steward.

"Now my dear child," said the officer, "we place you for the night under the care of the steward, he will shew you every attention. He is a father himself, and will feel for you as for one of his own children in a like situation."

"To-morrow," whispered the midshipman, "you will be placed under the care of a kind lady and her daughters."

Poor Mabel, scarcely able to keep from weeping, kissed the midshipman's hand, and bade him good night in a voice that trembled with emotion, and then Mr. Osborn, the steward, took her under his care.

William Thornton, who never quitted his hold of the casket, proceeded to his berth and locked it up carefully in his chest. Several of his comrades tormented him with inquiries, but hastily swallowing his supper and a glass of grog, he tumbled into his berth, turning a deaf ear to all their questions.

Midshipmen always sleep under every variety of disturbance, either of body or mind; so William Thornton slept in ten minutes as if he had not had a night's rest for twelve months.

How long he rested he knew not, but he was awoke by the voice of Charles Pole shouting in his ear, "You are wanted, William, in the state room."

He sprung out of bed and began dressing as if for a wager.

"Why did you let me sleep so long, Charley, eh?"

"Because Lieutenant Cooke said you wanted a good snooze, as you had none the night before. Why, Thornton, you are likely to turn out quite a hero of romance; there's Saunders been spinning a frightful yarn of your having shot a lot of republicans and released two princesses, and I don't know how many duchesses, and gained a casket of crown jewels."

"Stuff and nonsense, Charley. I'm off. I'll tell you all about it when I come back. I'll get Saunders' grog stopped for spinning such confounded yarns," and running up the stairs, he made his way towards the Admiral's state room, but O'Loughlin interrupted his course, shaking him by the hand.

"Faith, your a broth of a boy, William, to be galivanting duchesses and distressed damsels before you are fledged. Go on and prosper, by the time your beard grows you'll do. But be off

with you, and mind your P's and Q's before the Admiral."

He next encountered Lieutenant Cooke coming from the Admiral's cabin.

"Well, Thornton," said the lieutenant good humouredly, "how do you feel now? Your little *protegée* has been making a hundred enquiries after you, she is sitting at breakfast with his lordship, who, strange to say, after listening to her account of herself, seems to know a great deal about her family. But go in, they are waiting for you."

The young midshipman entered the Admiral's state room, and at once perceived little Mabel sitting at the breakfast table with the kind-hearted old Admiral. On his entrance she sprang from her chair with an exclamation of joy, and ran to him taking his hand, saying:

"Oh! dear brother William, how glad I am to see you, if my dear mamma were here how happy I should feel;" and then with childish innocence, quite ignorant of the etiquete between an Admiral and a midshipman, she added, "have

you breakfasted? Do come and have some, his lordship is so kind to me, and knows who I am."

William Thornton's face flushed as he looked into the Admiral's fine expressive features, and Lord Hood, who was then in his sixty-ninth year, said with a good humoured smile:

"Sit down, Master Thornton, sit down; I dare say you have not breakfasted, and I wish to ask you a few questions."

William Thornton sat down next Mabel, eyeing a cold turkey and a ham with a side glance. The steward was in attendance as well as the Admiral's own special attendant, and very shortly our hero found himself doing justice to fare very rarely in those days exposed to the always voracious appetite of a midshipman.

He then, at the Admiral's request, gave a distinct account of the events of the previous night, to which the Admiral listened with a great deal of interest expressed on his features.

"If I am not very much mistaken," said Lord Hood, "this young lady is the daughter of a once very dear friend, though a much younger

man than myself at the time of our intimacy. Do you remember your father, my dear young lady?" asked the Admiral, looking at Mabel.

"No, Monsieur," said Mabel; "I only remember my second father, the Duke; he was so good and so kind, and so loved mamma."

"This young lady," continued Lord Hood, "is no doubt the daughter of Hugh Granby Arden, whose widow I know married a French Duke. I believe she was induced to do so under very peculiar circumstances. If I am right her daughter is a cousin of Master Howard Etherton."

William Thornton started and looked surprised.

"Ah!" said the Admiral, "I see you are not aware that Howard Etherton's father, before he came to the title and estates of the Ethertons, was called Arden; in fact, he was brother to this young lady's father. However there is no time, neither is this a period for investigating these circumstances. What we must now do, is to procure a suitable asylum for Miss Arden till she can be restored

to her mother, or taken to England and placed under the care of her uncle. Therefore, you will at once take her on board the Thetis frigate, Captain Timmins has his wife and daughters with him. His good lady will take charge of the child, and provide her with proper garments; one of his girls is about the same age. But stay! I will write a few lines to Captain Timmins; he will remain with the fleet till we take possession of Toulon, which I expect to do in a few days."

The young girl got up, and going over to the Admiral took his hand, and would have kissed it, but he stooped and pressed her little pale cheek, saying he felt much interested about her, and would, when he had an opportunity, cause inquiries to be made after her mother.

An hour afterwards William Thornton, with Mabel by his side, was steering the Victory's gig, pulled by four seamen, for the Thetis frigate.

Captain Timmins was an exceedingly kind man, and a thorough good sailor. Nevertheless, we must admit, though nominated captain of his ship, as long as his wife remained on board

he was only second in command. He was a small, spare man, with a mild patient expression of countenance. Mrs. Captain Timmins (she always insisted on being styled captain, firmly believing that if necessary she could command, and actually work the Thetis), was in person the very opposite of her spouse, being tall and portly in person; carried her head high, and always interlarded her conversations with sea terms, not always, however, made use of in the right places. Notwithstanding a few follies of this sort, she was in reality a very kind and generous person; she was not more than five or six-and-thirty, and had a very pleasing countenance. She was also fond of dress.

It was a fine, lovely morning, though somewhat hot, the quarter-decks of the various ships were protected by snow-white awnings. A light westerly breeze played over the bright blue sea, the high land to the south and east of Toulon looked almost within grasp, so clear and fine was the atmosphere.

Mrs. Captain Timmins was walking the

quarter-deck with her two daughters, her worthy spouse looking through his glass at the various ships of war.

"What boat is that pulling for us, Timmins?" asked the Captain's lady.

"It's a gig from the Victory, with a mid and a little boy in it," said the Captain.

"Bless me!" returned the lady, "what little fellow can that be, the Victory has no little boys on board?"

"We shall soon know," replied her spouse, "for here they are along-side."

The ladder was let down, and leading Mabel by the hand, William Thornton advanced along the deck of the Thetis, and, touching his cap to the Captain, presented the Admiral's note.

In the mean time the mother and daughters were scrutinizing the pale and thin face of poor, sad little Mabel.

"Dear me! Very singular—very; quite romantic. Poor little thing!" muttered Captain Timmins, quite loud enough for his good lady and daughters to hear.

"Mary, my dear," he said aloud, finishing the perusal of the note from the Admiral, "his lordship has sent this little girl," looking at Mabel, "to stay with us for a few days."

"Bless me!" said the Captain's wife, "little girl! Do you mean to say this little thin boy is a girl?—if so, she is badly rigged, not ship shape."

"Exactly, my dear, exactly. The Admiral wishes you to make her ship shape, and be kind to her for a few days. She is the daughter of a duchess, and fled from Toulon for her life, and this young gentleman—Master Thornton—was mainly instrumental in saving her life."

"If she were the daughter of a peasant," said the lady, with a grand air, but a most kind look, as she advanced and took Mabel's hand, "being unfortunate, she demands our attention, under the flag of old England. Beg pardon, my dear, do you speak English?" Mrs. Captain Timmins was afraid that the fine speech she was about to make for the edification of her husband, the second Lieutenant of the Thetis,

who was standing near, and a solitary mid, who was regarding Mrs. Captain Timmins at a safe distance, for it must be confessed she kept the mids in awful subjection.

"Oh yes, Madame," said Mabel; "my father was English and so is mama."

"Dear me!" said the Captain's wife, surprised, "an English Duchess amongst those horrid Republicans; but come into my state room, Angelina and Seraphina are about the same height, and you shall be thoroughly re-fitted and rigged from their stores." Then, looking into the thoughtful, handsome features of William Thornton, whose fine, manly figure struck her at once, she continued: "And you, young gentleman, accompany us. I will order the steward to place refreshments on the table, you will then tell me all about this dear, sensible-looking child, whom I wish to present to you before you leave in a trim more becoming her age and sex."

Taking Mabel by the hand, the entire party descended into the main cabin. The two girls then took their young companion into their pri-

vate cabin, and the Captain and his lady, having ordered wine to be placed on the table, requested our hero to satisfy their curiosity respecting his adventures the preceding night.

Whilst the midshipman was satisfying their curiosity, little Mabel was undergoing the necessary metamorphosis from a little boy into a very sweet, interesting little girl. Captain Timmins's two daughters were kind and engaging, and they soon succeeded in winning the confidence of our poor heroine. When introduced into the cabin, all were delighted with the change. Thornton was surprised, and soon after rose to take leave of his little *protegèe*. The tears were in Mabel's eyes, but she bore the parting with fortitude, for the midshipman promised to visit her whenever he could. It was not without pain that he kissed her cheek and bade her farewell.

Returning on board the Victory, Thornton's comrades gathered around him, fully determined to hear his adventures in full.

"What a racket they all make," observed Master Etherton, with a sneer, "about a brat

of a girl, because she calls herself the daughter of a Duchess—a French Duchess. There are no titles in France now—an adventuress most likely."

"You are very likely to make a very great mistake, Howard Etherton," remarked our hero, quietly; "this child is an English girl, and, I am told, bears the same name as your father did before he took that of Etherton."

"What's that you say, Master Thornton?" exclaimed young Etherton, with a start, and changing colour. "My father's name was Arden—as good a name as any in England; but we knew of no other branch of our family bearing that name."

"You are in error, nevertheless, Master Etherton," returned our hero, "for this young lady's mother, the Duchesse de Coulancourt, had previously been married to a Mr. Granby Arden; the Admiral knew him intimately, and this little girl we are talking about is his child, Mabel Arden."

"A confounded impostor," passionately ex-

claimed young Etherton, with a very pale cheek, and with a vehemence that quite amazed his comrades. "Mr. Granby Arden was my father's brother. He was never married, and died abroad—so that, as I said before, this Duchess is an impostor, and her daughter a nameless brat, thrust upon you, seeing what a soft head you possessed," and he laughed mockingly as he said the words.

"I have a great mind to try," said William Thornton, angrily, "whether your head possesses the same qualification that I know your heart does; and if you use such language again in my hearing I will do so, let the consequences be what they may. I have done it once before, but if I have to repeat the lesson you will remember it."

"Be the powers of war! what's all this squabbling amongst you unruly youngsters?" exclaimed Lieutenant O'Loughlin, who, unobserved, had heard the whole dialogue, and who knew very well that if our hero promised a fellow mid a thrashing, he would faithfully stick to his

word. Now the Admiral was extremely strict with his midshipmen, and always severely punished both parties who infringed the rules. Fighting was on no account allowed.

"Well, Mr. O'Loughlin," said William Thornton, "what would you have me do? Here is a young lady, protected by the Admiral, who was an intimate friend of her father's, and Master Etherton takes it into his head to call her mother an impostor, and herself a nameless brat."

"Oh, by the Immortals! he'll put his foot in it in earnest," said the Lieutenant, and, turning to the cowed Howard Etherton, he added, "Faith, my lad, you must have more pluck than I ever gave you credit for, thus to give the lie to his Lordship."

"I did not give the lie, Mr. O'Loughlin," said Howard Etherton, "to anybody. I spoke to the best of my belief. I ought to know more of my family than anyone here."

"Bedad, you're right there, my lad, for the devil a hair anyone here cares for your family.

You may be cousin-German to Master Noah for all I know; but, if the Admiral knew that a young lady he acknowledges and protects, was called an impostor and a brat, be gor! I would'nt be in your skin for a trifle; but come with me, William, I want to talk to you a bit," and, taking the midshipman by the arm, he forced him to leave his companions.

At the expiration of two or three days, the British fleet became in a state of intense expectation and excitement, the Admiral having determined to land troops and take possession of the forts commanding the ships in the harbour, for intelligence had arrived of the surrrender of Marseilles to General Carteau and his army, whilst Rear-Admiral St. Julien manned the forts to the left of the harbour, to oppose the entrance of the British fleet.

Captain Elphinstone, of the "Robust," was entrusted with the command of the expedition against the forts, with fifteen hundred soldiers and two hundred marines and sailors; Lieutenant O'Loughlin and our hero being permitted

by the Admiral to volunteer on that expedition. This was the third time William Thornton was exposed to the fire of an enemy's guns.

It was not without a quicker pulsation of the heart, both from the excitement and the novelty of the affair, that young Thornton leaped from the boat upon the beach, and gazed up at the heights of Toulon that they were to storm, which were full six hundred feet high, rugged, and, to judge from the crumbling of the rocks under their feet, extremely difficult of ascent.

"Hurrah! by dad!" said Lieutenant O'Loughlin to his young companion, the Midshipman, "this is one foot forward and two backwards. Be the powers! I was near going with that big fellow," as a huge rock gave way under his feet, and thundered down with a cloud of dust upon those following, forcing them to jump nimbly out of the way.

The forts keeping up an incessant cannonade, killed and wounded many, but still the hardy sailors pressed onwards, with incessant cheering; at times gaily laughing as a comrade clutched at

a rock which gave way, and he and it rolled down together for several yards.

"You're a trump, William," said the Lieutenant, as a ball tore up the ground within a yard of the daring boy, who, with a bound, sprang over a deep fissure, and waved his cap to some of the tars of the "Victory" to follow, whilst a cloud of dust, stones, and gravel covered the ascending party. But the forts were gallantly stormed, and, after a fierce contest, the British remained in possession.

"You are a brave and gallant lad," said Captain Elphinstone, putting his hand upon young Thornton's shoulder, as, besmeared with dust and clay, without covering to the head, and his jacket cut in several places by musket balls. He made his appearance before the Captain, having just returned from bearing a message to the officer commanding the troops through a fierce fire of musketry—"go on as you have begun, and, if God spares you, you will be an honour to your country."

It was a glorious sight, the following day, standing on the ramparts of the fort, to behold the entrance of the British fleet into the outward harbour of Toulon, where they came to an anchor.

CHAPTER VI.

As strict matter of history, we must refrain from recording the events that followed the taking of Toulon by the British. It will be sufficient to say that as a midshipman William Thornton so distinguished himself, receiving only one slight wound, that he won the approbation and elicited the admiration of not only Vice-Admiral Lord Hood, but several of the other Commanders. During the proceedings, Sir Sidney Smith arrived from Smyrna in a small latine rigged vessel, which he had purchased and manned with over forty British seamen. In storming a

fort, the gallantry of William Thornton attracted Sir Sidney, and chancing to render him an important service during the attack, he afterwards solicited the Admiral's permission to retain the midshipman with him; and finally so satisfied was Sir Sidney with his skill and cool courage, that he entrusted the command of his little craft, the "Swallow," to our hero.

Whilst the British were in possession of Toulon, William Thornton exerted himself to the utmost in endeavours to trace the unfortunate Duchess de Coulancourt and Jean Plessis, but in vain. The frigate commanded by Captain Timmins had sailed for Genoa and Malta, but little Mabel had been placed in a cottage without Toulon, under the care of a royalist family of distinction, a Madame Volney and daughters, who were very kind to her. Our hero visited her several times, and the joy of the little girl was great indeed when she beheld him. She wept incessantly after her mother, but though pale and thin, she appeared to be improving in health.

At length the British Admiral found it neces-

sary to evacuate Toulon, and then a scene of indescribable confusion and dismay took place, for the unfortunate royalists well knew the fate that awaited them from the savage Commissioners of the Republic, and that monster, the deputy Carrier. Madame Volney, her two daughters, and Mabel were received on board the "Robust," whilst nearly four hundred fugitives were taken on board the "Princess Royal," bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Goodall.

The important service of destroying the ships and magazines was entrusted to Captain Sir Sidney Smith. Our hero and Charles Pole who accompanied him in the "Swallow" tender, prepared to attend upon Sir Sidney in his fearfully dangerous expedition. It was now the month of December, the weather wild and stormy, the wind north-west and extremely cold.

Sir Sidney attended by the "Swallow," three Spanish and three English gunboats, one commanded by Lieutenant O'Loughlin, proceeded to the arsenal to prepare whatever combustible ma-

terials were required for the work of devastation he was bent upon. By this time the dockyards had substituted the tricolour for the white cockade.

"By Jove, William," said Charles Pole, "they have turned loose all the galley slaves, and they say there are eight hundred of them; they seem inclined to commence hostilities. Those gentlemen, I suppose, now consider themselves worthy citizens of regenerated France."

"We'll soon shew them, Charley my boy, a sight that will rapidly develop their ideas of liberty and equality," and forthwith he placed the little tender in a position so that her guns, could completely command those on shore. Lieutenant O'Loughlin did the same with his gunboat. This proceeding awed the turbulent galley slaves. Whilst performing this manœuvre the two boats were exposed to the shots and shells fired from the Fort and the neighbouring hills, which Charles Pole declared was throwing a light upon the affair. Now and then the Republicans, posted in the houses, opened fire upon

Sir Sidney's party, busy at their operations, which induced our hero to try the effect of one of his guns pointed at the upper story of a house, the inhabitants of which had been remarkably civil and liberal with their shots. The ball went crashing through the wall, knocking the bricks and mortar in a shower into their faces—this dispersed them in double quick time ; but as the shades of night rapidly concealed the movements of those on shore, hundreds came down from the hills, and commenced rapid discharges of musketry.

"Come my lads," said the "Swallow's" commander, "they are getting ready; just give them a dose of grape."

"Aye, aye, sir, we will pepper the rascals' jackets," said Bill Saunders, applying the match to a gun well-pointed, which drove the assailants into the wildest confusion. "Well done, Swallow, go it my lads, was shouted from some of the party at work ashore; and then the cry arose, "Here's the 'Vulcan.'"

William Thornton turned round, and sure

enough beheld the "Vulcan," fire-ship, Captain Stacey, entering the basin towed by several boats.

The Commander placed the "Vulcan" in a masterly manner, right across the tier of the men of war. About two hours afterwards, the "Swallow" and the gun-boats were ordered to withdraw. They had scarcely receded a few hundred yards, when the trains laid to the different magazines were fired, and the flames ascended in terrific grandeur; but unfortunately the fire-ship, the "Vulcan," from an accident, also ignited, and burst into a sheet of flame awful to behold.

The effect of this tremendous light cast over the whole adjoining waters, and lighting up the basin and town near it like noon-day, was extraordinary.

The Republicans now distinctly seeing the situation of the British, set up furious outcries and shouts of vengeance, opening, at the same time, a terrific fire.

"Well, this is hot work enough, Charley," said our hero, regarding the scene before him with wonder and admiration. They were

within fifty yards of the "Union" gun-boat, Lieutenant O'Loughlin, and astern of her was another gun-boat. So vivid and brilliant were the flames, that every feature of the countenances of those on board the boats were distinctly recognisable. At this moment, as our hero was ordering the crew to drop the trailed latine sail forward, an awful and astounding explosion took place. The "Swallow" reeled under the shock, apparently lifted from the waters and dashed down again, the crew thrown one over the other. Regaining his feet, bewildered by the shock, William Thornton perceived the "Union" sinking, and the other gun-boat astern actually in pieces, having been blown into the air.*

Immediately, our hero leaped into the boat they were towing, and reached the side of the sinking gun-boat, picking up Lieut. O'Loughlin and the rest of the crew, excepting three that had been previously killed.

"Am I all together, William?" exclaimed

* Fact. *See* James's "Naval History."

Lieutenant O'Loughlin; "for, by St. Patrick! I felt as if every limb I had went sporting different ways. What was it—an earthquake?"

"I can't say; it shook us nearly to pieces, dismounted our two guns, and rolled our main-yard out of us."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Sir Sidney Smith, pulling up in an eight-oared gig, "that so few lives have been sacrificed by that horrible explosion."

"What was the cause of the explosion, Sir Sidney?" demanded Lieutenant O'Loughlin, giving himself a shake to satisfy himself that he was all right.

"Those accursed Spaniards," said Captain Smith, "instead of scuttling the 'Iris' frigate, set fire to her, and she had some thousand barrels of gunpowder on board; but make way for the basin, we must complete what those Spaniards have only partly begun."

The wind had now lulled, but numerous boats took the vessels in tow; but, on again approaching the basin, they found the boom

was thrown across the narrow entrance, and such an incessant volley of musketry was kept up, that they were compelled to abandon the enterprise.

As Charles Pole stood beside young Thornton, he received a musket ball in his left shoulder, that threw him on the deck, and as the midshipman stooped to raise him, O'Loughlin, who was standing directly behind him, received a slight wound on the side of the head.

"Bad cess to you," said the Irishman, as he bound a handkerchief round his head, and assisted William Thornton to raise Charles Pole, whom they wanted to take below, but he would not listen to them. So, staunching the wound as well as they could, he remained on deck.

Having performed all they possibly could, and fired the two seventy-fours, the "Hero" and the "Themistocles," whose flames added to the horrors of the scene, though Sir Sidney humanely landed all their crews. They were now preparing to rejoin the ships outside, when

another terrific explosion took place, by the blowing up of the powder vessel, the frigate "Montreal." The little "Swallow" and her boats, were at that moment in the midst of a horrible shower of falling timbers, which caused the water surrounding them to foam and boil as if a volcano was beneath, yet, singular to relate, they received not the slightest injury.

The scene at this moment was awfully grand and horrible. The two seventy-fours in the inner road were in a pyramid of flame, which lighted up the shores on each side with a vivid distinctness. The heights were crowded with human beings, and the various forts were blazing away, though doing very little damage.

In the midst of this terrific scene the troops were rapidly evacuating the town, under the able management of Captain Elphinstone. Numbers of boats were towing out the "Courageux," whilst the British ship the "Conflagration" was set on fire, it being impossible to get her out.

When the unfortunate Royalist inhabitants found that the British were evacuating the town, they deserted their houses, and every article they possessed, and a scene commenced which those who witnessed could never forget—a fearful massacre that stained Republican France with shame and reproach to future times. On the way to the shore the wretched fugitives were cut in two by the balls showered after them—mothers, with infants clinging to their breasts, were cut mercilessly to pieces; neither sex nor age were spared by those inhuman butchers. To the honour of our countrymen, let it be remembered that above 5,640 men, women, and children, were received, and every attention paid them, on board the British vessels of war.

Amidst all these horrors, the little "Swallow," Sir Sidney Smith's latine-rigged tender, pursued her way to her anchorage outside, fired upon as it passed by the two forts, Bolognier and Aiguilette, but the shot being ill-directed, did her no mischief.

Thus ended the famous expedition against Toulon. We leave the readers of history to form their own judgment with respect to its utility, and the good it caused to either England or Royalist France.

The day following, William Thornton obtained permission to visit little Mabel on board the "Robust."

The "Robust" was commanded by Captain Keith Elphinstone, as brave and kind an officer as any in the fleet. He had noticed the gallantry of our hero the preceding night, and knew that Sir Sidney Smith had taken a most especial liking to him. There were over three hundred unhappy fugitives, deprived of everything but the garments on their backs, on board the "Robust;" numbers of them were assembled on the decks, gazing upon the land they were soon to leave for ever, others for long years.

Madame Volney, her two daughters, and Mabel Arden, had a cabin to themselves. Madame was the widow of Rear-Admiral Vol-

ney, a most determined Royalist, who perished on the first breaking out of the Revolution, whilst in Paris attending upon the King, whom he earnestly implored to fly and trust himself to the fleet, which, at that time, was almost entirely in favour of the monarch.

Madame Volney, luckily, was received on board the "Robust" before the evacuation of the town, and was able to secure a considerable amount of property in ready money, many valuables and jewels.

She knew the Duchesse de Coulancourt by name, having heard of her misfortunes and persecutions in Lyons; she therefore gladly and kindly received her daughter under her protection. Both her own daughters were grown up —one was seventeen, the other, twenty; both amiable and kind-hearted girls.

It is not very often that midshipmen are noticed by Captains of 74-gun ships, but Captain Elphinstone was an exception. He was remarkably kind to all his young gentle-

men; prepossessed in favour of our hero, he received him with great cordiality, spoke of the proceedings of the previous night, and congratulated him on his singular escape from the blowing-up of the "Iris." Our hero answered all Captain Elphinstone's questions modestly, but with a manly, open manner that greatly pleased him. The Captain was not aware that the little girl under the protection of Madame Volney was English. William Thornton, therefore, gave the Captain a brief outline of her unfortunate story, and the manner in which he had become acquainted with her.

"Oh! I understand now," said Captain Elphinstone, "you, then, are the midshipman that accompanied Lieutenant Cooke into the town, and who behaved so well on that occasion; I heard that a midshipman from the Victory did accompany the Lieutenant, but I did not hear the name."

After some more questions on the subject of little Mabel, he was permitted to descend to the cabin to see her.

As he had several times visited Madame Volney when residing in her cottage without the town, he was no stranger.

As usual, the little girl flew to his side, embracing him with the warmest affection, looking up into his handsome features, with tears in her eyes, saying:

"Oh, dear brother! how rejoiced I am to see you alive and well. All last night I could not close my eyes; the terrible noise of the firing, the frightful glare of the flames, seen from our cabin windows, terrified us to death; and I guessed you were in the midst of it all, and I prayed that you might be spared."

"That is quite true, Mr. Thornton," said Madame Volney, with a sigh; "none of us could sleep, or indeed lie down; the thoughts of the horrors enacting on shore, the misery we knew our poor defenceless countrymen and women were suffering, made our hearts ache; and then, when the boats came alongside with the unhappy fugitives, and we heard their cries

and lamentations, our sufferings nearly equalled theirs."

"This dear child did nothing but think of you," said Mademoiselle Agatha Volney, the youngest daughter, a very pretty and engaging girl, and who looked upon our hero with surprise and admiration, that one so young and so gentle in manner and appearance, could be mixed up amid such horrible scenes as the preceding night must have witnessed.

"I fear indeed," observed our hero, "that hundreds of unfortunate Royalists suffered last night, and most unfortunate it was that we were forced to evacuate the town; but with the force remaining at the disposal of the Admiral, it was utterly impossible, I understand, to hold the place."

The conversation then turned upon the future proceedings of the British fleet, and what was to become of the ill-fated fugitives on board the British ships. Madame Volney declared it was her intention to procure a passage to London in some merchant vessel,

and proposed to our hero that Mabel should continue with her till she should be claimed by her relatives in England.

Poor Mabel could scarcely refrain from tears.

"Is there no hope, then," she anxiously exclaimed, "of hearing some intelligence of my beloved mamma? Oh! are we never to meet again?"

"Do not grieve, dear Mabel," soothingly urged William Thornton; "though we may be baffled here in gaining some trace of her, yet depend on it Jean Plessis, faithful and devoted as he is, will never rest till he comes on the track of those who carried her off. She will know you are safe, and taken to your relatives in England, and, when released herself, she will no doubt seek to reach England to rejoin you."

Mabel listened and sighed. It was a bad prospect for the poor girl, and when William Thornton kissed her, and, with great affection in his manner and tone, bade her and Madame Volney farewell for a time, she burst into a

passionate flood of tears, and, running into her berth, hid her face upon her pillow.

"She is a most sensitive child," said Madame Volney's daughter; "and though only twelve years old, has all the thoughts and feelings of a far maturer age."

"Well, I trust and hope," said the midshipman, "that time will do its usual work, and reduce the violence of her present feelings. She is very young, and if her relatives receive her kindly, it will tend greatly to obliterate the memory of the past."

CHAPTER VII.

A DAY or two after our hero's visit to Mabel, he received orders to attend the Admiral, who required his presence in the cabin.

Lord Hood was alone, sitting at a table covered with papers, letters, and despatches. His Lordship looked up, pointed with the pen in his hand to a seat, and then finished the letter he was employed upon when our hero entered. His secretary, the moment before, had left the cabin.

After a few minutes, Lord Hood looked up, and laying down his pen, said:

"Well, Master Thornton, how is your little *protegée*, Miss Arden?"

"Greatly grieved, my Lord; she continues to bewail the disappearance of her mother, and takes her lonely situation much to heart."

"Yes, poor child!" said the Admiral, in a kind, thoughtful, tone, "she must feel her orphan state. I am interested in her, for her father did me a great service at one time—as important a service as one man can render another; I would, therefore, befriend his child"

"Pardon me, my Lord," timidly observed our hero, "but Master Howard Etherton declares that Mr. Hugh Granby Arden, his uncle, was never married, and died abroad."

"Then he states that which is not the fact," returned Lord Hood, sternly; "at least, with respect to his not being married. I was aware he died abroad—he died in France. However, I sent for you to let you know that I have appointed Lieutenant O'Loughlin to take the command of the French 18-gun corvette 'Babet,' captured in Toulon. He is to take her

to England, and will sail in company with the other captured ships. This is, of course, only a temporary command, and I will also place you in her."

William Thornton's cheek flushed with delight, as he started from his seat with surprise.

"The 'Babet,' however," continued Lord Hood, "has scarcely half her proper number of guns, for she was fitting out when seized; and her complement of men must be small, for we cannot spare more. I have communicated with Admiral Volney's widow, and she is quite rejoiced to take her passage in the 'Babet' to England; Miss Arden will thus be protected and taken care of, and you will have the satisfaction of personally seeing her restored to her relatives, which I am sure will gratify you exceedingly."

"Indeed, my Lord," put in the midshipman with enthusiasm, "you could not confer upon me a greater favour, and I trust I shall be worthy of your Lordship's generous kindness."

"You have behaved very well, young man,"

said the Admiral, kindly, "and Sir Sidney Smith is highly pleased with your gallantry and coolness in that daring enterprise of his; he offers to take you with him, but I think you will prefer the appointment and trust, I now propose to you."

"For little Mabel Arden's sake, my Lord, infinitely. Nevertheless, I feel exceedingly grateful to Captain Sir Sidney Smith for his offers of service. He said something to me, yesterday of this, and, not knowing your Lordship's generous intentions, I expressed myself delighted with the promotion he promised me."

"Well, your absence will only be for the voyage," said Lord Hood; "you will rejoin this ship by the first vessel coming out, as will also Lieutenant O'Loughlin."

After a few more observations and directions from the Admiral, William Thornton retired, greatly delighted, and with permission to proceed to the "Robust," to impart the intelligence he had received to Madame Volney and Mabel Arden.

Whilst William Thornton was paying his visit on board the "Robust," Master Howard Etherton was extremely busy writing a long letter home to go along with the Admiral's despatches to England. As this letter reached England some time before the arrival of Mabel Arden, owing to circumstances that will be hereafter explained, we must request our readers to follow us to the shores of England, in order that we may introduce to their notice the family of Master Howard Etherton, as they will figure in this narrative rather prominently.

Howard Etherton's father, before he succeeded to the baronetcy and estates of the Ethertons, was a Captain Arden. He was a younger brother, his elder brother dying abroad, it was supposed, without heirs; indeed, it was not generally known that he was ever married. Godfrey Arden, the younger brother, therefore, as next heir, took possession of the estates. Etherton Manor was a very fine mansion, situated in a richly wooded and much-admired part of Hampshire, a few miles from Hurst Castle,

and commanding an extensive view not only over the estuary of Southampton water, but also over the narrow sea dividing England from its garden—the Isle of Wight. At this period of our story Sir Godfrey Etherton was in his fiftieth year; he had two sons and seven daughters; his lady was some two or three years his junior. She was the only daughter of a tolerably rich slop-seller in Portsmouth. When Sir Godfrey married her, he was only a poor lieutenant in the navy, who was quite willing to overlook his wife's want of birth in consideration of five thousand pounds hard cash, which he received with her.

At that time there was a very remote chance indeed of the poor lieutenant succeeding to the Etherton estates.

When Mrs. Arden became Lady Etherton she was exceedingly anxious to forget that her father, at this period gathered to his fathers, was ever called a slop-seller. All mention of her parents and relatives was forbidden. In person she was short and robust; she dressed richly and gaudily,

but without the slightest taste, notwithstanding all the efforts of her well-educated, but haughty and imperious daughters.

As Captain Arden, of the "Dauntless," the Baronet was a morose and exacting Commander, a man without one particle of feeling. It is quite sufficient to say he was universally detested by both officers and crew.

After succeeding to the baronetcy and the estates, he retired into private life, into which he carried all his morose and unamiable qualities. Always dissatisfied, he declared everything went wrong with him. His eldest daughter married, for love, a poor subaltern, and was banished the paternal mansion—no great punishment. His eldest son remained a gentleman with nothing to do but to spend in dissipation and excesses of all kinds, five times the amount allowed him yearly by his father; the consequences were that he became deeply involved in debt. The youngest son, Howard Etherton, the father's favourite, was, as our readers know, a midshipman on board the "Victory," expecting, through

his father's interest and position, rapid promotion, as soon as his six years' probation had run out.

Howard Etherton's disposition and nature were utterly unprincipled; he was also, for one so young, parsimonious to a degree; though handsomely allowed by his father, he hoarded all he possibly could spare to suit his own purposes hereafter. He, as well as the rest of the family, knew that his father came into the estates, from the fact of his elder brother having died without heirs; he also knew that there were rumours of his uncle in his youth having carried off a young lady somewhere in Italy, her parents opposing their union, but as years passed over, and no tidings of him reached his family, till an authentic account of his death became circulated, and afterwards fully proved; the previous account of his marriage was considered a mere rumour, and as neither wife nor child made their appearance, Captain Arden's claims were undisputed.

When Howard Etherton therefore heard on board the "Victory" that the Duchess de Coulan-

court was positively, before she married the Duke, the widow of Mr. Granby Arden, and that a son and daughter by her first husband were living, he became, as we have stated, startled and confounded, for if such was positively the case, and could be proved, his father had no longer a just claim to either the baronetcy or the estates. But when he heard that Mabel Arden had declared that her brother was cruelly murdered at Lyons, he felt singularly relieved. Still, the knowledge that Mabel would be entitled to a very handsome fortune out of the estate, especially provided by settlements and deeds appertaining to the Etherton Estates, rankled in his heart and ill-regulated mind.

It was the intelligence, therefore, that he heard on board the "Victory," that he sent in his letter to his father.

He also found vent for his hatred to young Thornton, of whom he spoke in the bitterest terms, imputing to his officiousness the recovery of Mabel Arden.

Sir Godfrey Etherton in his own mind always

believed that his brother had eloped with a young lady from some city in Italy, but whether he married her or not he could not discover; neither, strange to say, could he find out the name of the young lady. There was a mystery enveloping the whole transaction that baffled him.

Of all his family, his wife was his only confidante; to her he confided all his thoughts and conjectures, though she was the very last person, to judge by appearance and manner, that he would seek, though she was his wife, to repose confidence in, for she was the very reverse of himself in everything; but the secret was, she was really attached to him, and he to her, at least he liked her as much as his selfish, cold nature would permit him to like anything.

Sir Godfrey was no schemer or plotter; he had nothing of the villain about him; had his brother married and left a child, a boy or a girl, he would have made no attempt to deprive either of their just rights. The morning he received his son's letter, he was sitting at break-

fast with his lady and four of their daughters, two of them not out of their teens, the other two were of the respective ages of seventeen and nine. On opening the letter to satisfy Lady Etherton's eager inquiries concerning her son, Sir Godfrey's eye caught the name of Arden.

"God bless my soul," he exclaimed, turning somewhat pale, and, indeed, no little agitated; "how extraordinary!"

"Nothing has occurred to our Henry I trust," said Lady Etherton, anxiously. "I always said it was a sad thing to expose our boy with his expectations."

"His expectations!" repeated Sir Godfrey, sarcastically, and then added: "No, Jane; nothing has happened to him. I will read you his letter presently."

The daughters, though no doubt as curious as their mother, took the hint, and left the room.

"You look disturbed, Godfrey," said Lady Etherton. "What can Howard have written to vex you."

"Well, the intelligence is not perhaps as bad

as I thought," said Sir Godfrey, drawing his breath as if relieved, and laying down the letter having read it carefully through. "Do you know, Jane, that my suspicions that my brother Granby had married, is turning out correct?"

"Heavens! What do you mean?" exclaimed Lady Etherton, in her turn looking agitated. "Has he left any children?"

"He did leave a boy and a girl."

"Merciful goodness," interrupted the Baronet's wife, "this is dreadful! We shall—"

"Nay," interrupted Sir Godfrey; "you are frightening yourself without cause. I was startled myself; but the son it seems was beheaded."

"Thank God!—that is—hem—really, Godfrey, you startled me—I do not mean to thank God that the unfortunate boy has lost his head, which is very singular, but, I mean it would be very terrible for us to lose the title and estate, and with such a family of daughters."

"Yes; it would be much better that I never had succeeded to it, than that alternative, for by

continuing in the service I should by this time have been a Rear-Admiral."

"Thank God it is as it is; but how is it then with respect to the daughter; and where is Granby Arden's wife?"

"I will read you the letter," said the Baronet, "and then you will know as much as I do," and he did so.

Lady Etherton listened eagerly. When he had concluded, she said, with some bitterness:

"Who is this youngster, William Thornton, who has made himself so conspicuous, and who, Howard says, is his bitter enemy?"

"Pooh!" returned the Baronet, contemptuously. "Boy's enmity—a rival midshipman. I kept those troublesome urchins in their proper place when I commanded the "Dauntless." But who this William Thornton is, it matters not; he is a midshipman, and, as Howard says, the natural son of one of Lord Hood's coxwains. I saw his name mentioned in the paper as a very high-spirited boy, and that he was entrusted by Captain Sir Sidney Smith with the command of

a little tender on the night they burned the French ships in Toulon—a miserable failure that affair. But with respect to this Mabel Arden, whom we may expect in England shortly, we must afford her our protection. The worst of it is, she is entitled to twenty thousand pounds fortune out of the estates, when she becomes ot age. Had her brother lived, the blow would have been an awful one, to lose title and estate, and forced to live upon a Captain's half-pay, or go to sea again."

Lady Etherton looked startled.

"I hope—that is—I wonder if the boy really lost his head. Strange accident, was it not, Godfrey?"

"Accident!" repeated the Baronet, looking at his spouse rather contemptuously. "Why, Jane, what are you thinking of? You forget they are taking heads off in France at this moment for mere amusement; the boy must somehow or other have got mixed up in their bloody orgies, and they guillotined him. His mother, the Duchess of Coulancourt, it seems, fell into the hands of

the Revolutionists in Toulon, and may at this moment be no more. There's a strange mystery about my brother's marriage, and his widow afterwards marrying a French Duke."

"How old is this little girl you expect to arrive in England?" questioned Lady Etherton.

"Howard says about eleven or twelve; a young delicate thing, not likely to live over the voyage."

"If she does live," said Lady Etherton, thoughtfully, "she would make a right good match for Howard, wouldn't she?"

"You are early in your matrimonial speculations, Jane," said the Baronet; "but you are not far out, from causes which you know. To have to pay over that twenty thousand pounds, and interest, now, would be inconvenient. The interest due on it, and her long minority, would make her a very eligible match for a younger son."

"Very, indeed!" said Lady Etherton. "Would it not be as well to withdraw Howard from the

navy, and let the young people grow up together?"

"I would not remove him from his profession at this period on any account. Charlotte's marriage with young Lord Coldburgh will cost me ten thousand pounds, and if I have to pay up this twenty thousand pounds and interest at once to the trustees, if there are any, of Miss Arden, it will make a sum of thirty thousand pounds altogether; this will encumber the property for a time, and five other daughters to be disposed of. I am willing to make this sacrifice for Charlotte, for Lord Coldburgh, as to rank and influence, is a first-rate match."

"Charlotte is a lucky girl," said the mother, with a pleased look. Now, whether she herself thought so or not will appear hereafter.

Having thus given our readers a brief outline of the Etherton family, of which our heroine, Mabel Arden, was expected to become a member on her arrival in England, we will return to our hero on board the "Victory," which, still with the British fleet, lay off Toulon.

CHAPTER VIII.

"You are one of fortune's favourites," said Charles Pole to William Thornton, who was taking leave of his comrades on board the "Victory," previous to his departure the following morning, for the Babet corvette was quite ready for sea. Madame Volney and daughters, and Mabel Arden were on board, waiting the signal to weigh.

"I wish in my heart you were coming with us, Charles," said our hero, warmly pressing his friend's hand; "it is the only drawback to the pleasure I anticipate; but I shall, please the fates, soon rejoin you."

"Ah," said several of the Mids, with lengthened faces, "you will have such a jolly life of it, with O'Loughlin for a skipper, lots of good things, and no nip cheese to stint your allowance."

"Never look down-hearted," said our hero, "you will all have a turn of luck by-and-by."

"To the devil with such luck!" said Howard Etherton, with a sneer. "I don't see much to grieve after; a few weeks' liberty is the most you can make of it, with a chance of being captured on the way. The inside of a French prison would be a nice variety," and not wishing to exchange a good-bye with his fellow Mid, Howard Etherton walked away.

"Well, here's success to you, William, and a safe passage, lots of fun, and a quick return to us," said William Thornton's friends, and down went bumpers of purser's champagne.

An hour afterwards, William Thornton was put on board the "Babet," where he found his friend Lieutenant O'Loughlin, the appointed

commander of the corvette, walking the quarter deck, enjoying a glorious sunset and a pipe.

"Well, my lad, bade them all good bye? There's Madame below, and her daughters, quite anxious that you should take your coffee with them; and your little *protegée* popping up her head every now and then to see if you have arrived. Be the piper of Moll Kelly, you're a broth of a boy with the fair sex; go on and prosper; faith, I think you might turn Turk with advantage."

William Thornton laughed, saying:

"I never knew you to object to the company of a pretty face; but as you are my Commander now, I must be careful what I say."

"Oh, be gor, if you go to studying manners and touching hats to Patrick O'Loughlin, be the powers, I'll shut you up from the women altogether. But tell me, William, how long will it take you to teach me a few French sentences, such as—hem—as, 'I love you,' and all that kind of thing; for, confound it, I don't know a

word of their parley-vous, and that's a sweet creature below."

"Oh," said William Thornton, with a smile; "the admiral's widow,—ah, so she is; best tempered woman possible."

"Devil take your impudence; you don't want to make love to the whole three, do you, and leave me the mother, eh?"

"Make love," said our hero, very demurely, "who ever heard of a Midshipman making love? but I suppose it's Mademoiselle Agatha's eyes, that have scorched your *tinder* heart; faith, O'Loughlin, it has had so many sparks applied to it that one would imagine it was past kindling again. I'll tell you what I will do for you, I'll set to work at once to teach Mademoiselle Agatha English; I will engage to make her decline the verb 'I love,' before a week's out."

"Oh, by St. Peter! the devil doubt ye, my lad; but I'll try that myself. Stick to the little thing with her fine dark eyes like two diamonds. She'll make a tidy craft by the time the cat's

done cleaning your chin, and I'll lend you a razor then."

William Thornton laughed, and dived down the companion, and soon found himself seated at table beside his serious-faced little *protegée*, and the two lively, pretty daughters of Madame Volney.

"So we sail to-morrow," said Agatha Volney, fixing her laughing blue eyes upon the Midshipman, "you seem quite elated at quitting the 'Victory' for this little ship."

"You must remember," said our hero, "that the 'Victory' has not the attractions on board that the 'Babet' has. This little voyage will be quite a charming episode in a poor midshipman's career. One to be remembered with delight."

Agatha's pretty face coloured a little; she certainly looked pleased. She was the same age as young Thornton, and he, for his years, looked exceedingly manly.

Poor little Mabel was still pale and thoughtful, the image of her fond and beautiful mother was

ever before her, and now on the point of leaving the land that contained her cherished parent pining in captivity; alas! perhaps dead, the poor child felt her situation keenly. To William Thornton she turned for consolation, and when near him, and listening to his kind and soothing words, she appeared to droop less.

"So we sail with a whole fleet of ships, Master Thornton," said Madame Volney.

"Yes, madame," said our hero, "most of the vessels taken in Toulon, sail in company. We shall have that magnificent ship, the 'Commerce de Marseilles,' hundred and twenty guns, and the 'Puissant,' seventy-four; and the 'Perle' and 'Arethusa' frigates, and several smaller craft; there is not much danger of capture in such company."

Lieutenant O'Loughlin, or rather Captain O'Loughlin, entered the cabin, making a low bow to the party, and stammering out a mixture of French and English, which he intended for "Pray do not disturb yourself," but the two girls insisted upon the really handsome and

dashing looking sailor sitting down and joining them.

This he did, desiring the Midshipman to say, "That he was proud of having such a freight on board the 'Babet,' and that he hoped they would have a brush with a French corvette, or even a frigate, just to show them how devoted he was to the service of the young ladies."

"I must alter the last part of your speech, Captain," said our hero, laughing, "you must include the mother."

"Well," said Madame Volney, with a smile, for she understood English tolerably, on William Thornton's literally translating the Captain's speech; "we feel highly the compliment, but for our own parts, we should prefer his devotion without the brush with the corvette."

"Be St. Patrick! the eyes of those girls so bewilder me," said O'Loughlin, "that I forgot what I came down here for. Here, look at this," and he pulled a very soiled, and sealed note from his waistcoat; "a fishing boat with

two men in her pulled up alongside just after you went down, and saying something or other which I did not understand, handed up this note. I called out to them to hold on till I sent for you to speak to them; but, confound their impudence, they did not seem to understand me. What's that on the back? it's not English."

"No," said William Thornton, looking at the writing, "by Jove, it is directed to me!"

"You," said O'Loughlin, "that's not your name at the back; I could make that out if it were."

"No, it's not my name, but you see it says, 'To the young Midshipman on board the 'Babet,' and that's me, unless you chose to change ranks with me."

"Upon my conscience I'd have no objection, if I got the gift of the language by the change. But what the deuce is in it; are there any girls ashore looking after you?"

"No, I think not," said our hero laughing; and begging Madame's and the young ladies'

pardon, he opened the note. But the name of Jean Plessis at the bottom made him say out loud, and in French:

"Mabel, this is from Jean Plessis!"

The child gave a cry of joy and clasped her hands, whilst the Misses Volney started up with joyful exclamations. Captain O'Loughlin rubbed his head, uttered an anathema against the French language, and looked at Agatha Volney's handsome features, lighted up with the glow of expectation, as she said:

"Oh, dear! perhaps we shall hear something of this dear child's mother. Do read it out, Mr. Thornton."

This our hero did as follows:

"MONSIEUR,—

"To relieve the anxiety Mademoiselle Arden must feel concerning her mother, I contrive, though at great risk, to send this to you, having found out that she and you are on board the 'Babet.'

"The Duchess is *quite safe* and well, I dare

not write more, and with the blessing of God we may be in England as soon as your ship. I cannot venture to put more on paper—tell Madmoiselle to keep up her spirits and all will be well.

"JEAN PLESSIS."

The overjoyed child threw her arms round Agatha Volney's neck and burst into tears, exclaiming:

"Oh! dear, dear mamma is safe and well, and that dear good Jean Plessis, how I love him for his faith and devotion!"

Agatha kissed the little girl fondly, which proceeding seemed to effect the worthy Commander of the 'Babet,' who would willingly have offered his service for a similar demonstration on the part of the fair French girl, but the loud report of a cannon roused him from his reverie, and caused him to rush upon deck. William Thornton followed. There had sprung up a fine breeze out of the gulf, and the gun was to call attention to the signals.

"Ah! I thought so," said Captain O'Loughlin,

"the signal to get under weigh. Here's a glorious breeze, we shall now see what this craft can do, for I have a very good opinion of her; she has fine beam, carries very square yards, and has a very clean entrance."

In a few minutes the boatswain's whistle called the crew into action; there were but forty-two men, officers included, on board. Although an eighteen-gun corvette, she had at this time only eight twelve-pounder carronades mounted, the rest of the guns were below, and as the "Babet" was very short handed, and required some considerable repair before fit for actual service in the British navy, Lieutenant O'Loughlin's directions were to take her to Plymouth, and avoid any encounter with the enemy's cruisers, if compatible with honour to do so.

It was a dark night when the various vessels sailing in company got under weigh. It was not intended or expected that they should keep together after sailing, the disparity of their size and equipment putting that out of the question. Their restrictive orders were to make the best

of their way to an English port, excepting two or three, which were bound to Rochford, to land the Royalist fugitives from Toulon.

With the wind at north west, the "Babet" under topsails and top-gallant sails, went rapidly through the water. The log was tried towards morning, she was then going better than twelve knots, which Captain O'Loughlin thought very good work considering the breeze and the sail set.

It was the latter end of December, it therefore did not surprise the Commander of the corvette, that as the sun rose on the following morning the gulf wind fell, and the appearance of the sky shewed signs of heavy weather from the south west. They had run during the night out of sight of land and from all the vessels, save the huge Commerce le Marseilles and the two frigates, which were in sight about three leagues ahead.

Before mid-day there was a short calm with a a long swell from the south and east.

Madame Volney and her daughters and Mabel came on deck, though it was extremely cold, but

like all young voyagers on the vasty deep they paid their initiate to its power, by being very sick all night, and anxious for fresh air.

"I am sorry," said William Thornton, "to see that you and the young ladies have been suffering, Madame Volney."

Poor Mabel looked even paler than usual.

"It is a suffering few escape," said Madame Volney, "but I suppose it is what we must endure for a few days; indeed, very likely if we have a good passage we shall not have time to become good sailors."

"I trust you will not suffer beyond to-day, or to-morrow at furthest," said our hero.

"We must have sailed very fast in the night, Mr. Thornton; I see no land anywhere. What an immense ship that is away before us," said Agatha Volney, trying to shake off the disagreeable sensation of giddiness she experienced.

"That is the 'Commerce de Marseilles,' and most likely the Puissant and the Perle are with her."

Madame Volney sighed, saying:

"The Puissant was the last ship my noble but unfortunate husband commanded, it is somewhat strange that we should be proceeding to England with her."

Captain O'Loughlin joined the party, and made an attempt to express his sorrow at seeing them all looking so pale, but as the day wore on and a light breeze sprung up from the south, they all began to get gradually much better.

Little Mabel seemed to regain some little portion of spirit, the news of her mother's safety and the prospect of meeting her in England cheered her. And as the sickness wore off—for sometimes children suffer less than adults—she felt a desire to walk about the deck, William Thornton aiding and assisting her, and chatting to her of her future prospects, making the day pass pleasantly enough; the "Babet" working to windward under a light breeze but with a very threatening sky, heavy masses of clouds rising rapidly in the south-east quarter.

After the ladies had retired, our hero and his Commander kept pacing the deck in conversation.

"What are you to do with your little charge?" demanded Captain O'Loughlin, "when we reach Plymouth I had not time to ask you before sailing."

"Why, you see," returned the Midshipman, "Lord Hood had a long conference with Howard Etherton, which satisfied his lordship that Howard's father, Sir Godfrey Etherton, was little Mabel's uncle. Though Howard did all he could to persuade the Admiral that Mr. Granby Arden was never married—but his lordship said he knew better—he did not pretend to say that he knew he left children, but he felt convinced that the contents of the casket given me by Mabel's mother would sufficiently explain the matter. 'You are very young, Master Thornton,' said the Admiral to me afterwards, 'to be concerned in an affair of this sort, but as it appears the wish of the Duchesse de Coulancourt that, young as you are, you should have the care of this child and this casket, I will not alter her desires. When you reach Plymouth or Portsmouth proceed to London, take the casket which

is sealed to Mr. Joseph Stanmore, my solicitor, and a most eminent man, give him also this letter,' handing one to me, 'and then be guided by him.' Thus you see, O'Loughlin, my course is properly chalked out. Mr. Stanmore lives in Cavendish Square, so leaving Mabel with Madame Volney, I shall go up to London as soon as we reach Plymouth."

Captain O'Loughlin seemed buried in thought, at last he looked up, saying:

"You are in love with Agatha Volney!"

The midshipman burst into so loud and hearty a laugh, that it startled the man at the wheel.

"Well, upon my honour, Captain O'Loughlin—"

"Oh, bother with your Captain! If you go on with any more of that nonsense, I must give you up. Call me Patrick or O'Loughlin, but to the deuce with my captainship! What did you laugh in that manner for; by Jove, you shook all the wind out of the royals?"

"The idea of a boy, scarcely seventeen, in love with a full-grown Demoiselle Francaise, of nine-

teen! You are dreaming, or what's deuced more likely you are in love with her yourself."

"Devil a doubt of it, my lad, I confess; but you look so sweet at one another. Isn't there the other little girl? She will, in four or five years, be tolerably good looking; she has fine eyes at all events. She will never forget you, and, by Jove, you may depend on it, she will have lots of cash!"

"By Jove, O'Loughlin, you are pitching into the future, like a jolly boat in a head sea, manufacturing a wife for me five or six years off. I don't intend," continued our hero, "to get married till I am a Post Captain—perhaps an Admiral."

"Tare and nouns! If you wait till you are an Admiral, with perhaps a leg and an arm, or an eye, less than your complement, she must be a tidy craft that will take you in tow. Hollo! There's a squall!"

As he spoke, the boatswain's whistle was heard, the men hurrying up, whilst O'Loughlin gave

rapid orders to take in the royals, and furl the top gallant sails, for the ship heeled over to a very sudden and singular kind of squall, that struck the water within a few yards of them. In a few minutes the sea was feather white, squall after squall coming over its hitherto tranquil surface. But the Babet was rapidly got under double reefed topsails, and top-gallant masts housed, and was standing away to the westward, close hawled.

"By St. Patrick, how suddenly this gale has come on," observed Captain O'Loughlin to the first mate, William Thornton having gone below to reassure their passengers, who were alarmed by the sudden and, indeed, violent heeling over of the corvette.

"Yes, sir," returned the mate, an old and experienced sailor; "but common enough in the Mediterranean. I should not be surprised if it increased to a very heavy gale; it's looking exceedingly black to windward."

"She's a steady craft under canvass, Mr. Holder."

"Yes, sir; but our rigging is all new, so we must be tender, or our masts may suffer."

"It would be well to get up some preventive back stays, and take in the lee rigging, which I see is as slack as a purser's liberality."

As the night, which was intensely dark, advanced, the gale increased to a hurricane. Captain O'Loughlin, on consulting his charts, found they were heading towards the Spanish coast. So rapidly had the sea increased, that before morning they were preparing to heave the ship to, when the man forward sung out:

"Ship right ahead."

The next moment, as Captain O'Loughlin and our hero were anxiously looking out, a huge ship was dimly seen, rising on the top of a monstrous billow. She was lying to.

"It is the French ship, the 'Commerce De Marseilles,'" said William Thornton, as the man at the wheel was ordered to keep the Babet a point or two to the nor'-west; and then she was hove to, just as a gun was fired from the

"Commerce De Marseilles," and the night signal displayed.

This was promptly answered by the crew of the corvette, and her name given, and then all relapsed into silence, excepting the roar of the gale through the rigging, and the breaking surges as they dashed against the side of the ship. Still the gale increased, and when the grey light of morning broke over the storm tossed deep—they could distinctly make out three ships, not half a mile from each other, all lying to.

CHAPTER IX.

THIS was the memorable storm on the 28th of December, 1793. So tremendous became the hurricane before sun-set of the day following its commencement, that the Babet became literally buried in the tremendous seas. She had lost her bowsprit, close to the stem, a great portion of her bulwarks, and all her boats, and just as night set in, a sea of terrific bulk and fury broke on her larboard bow; fortunately, it was expected, and the crew saved themselves from being washed overboard by timely precaution; but for several moments all thought the corvette was sinking, when a tremendous crash took

place, and both main and fore masts went over the side, a furious sea striking her at the same time, fortunately driving her right round, before the tempest.

Holding on by ropes stretched across the decks, Captain O'Loughlin and William Thornton called out to the crew to cut away the wreck with their axes, and two men were lashed at the wheel to keep her steady before the storm.

"Be St. Patrick, William," said the Commander, giving himself a shake, "it was nearly up with us. We shall drive ashore before morning, I fear."

"God forbid!" said our hero, thinking of the terrified and dismayed females fastened down below. "She is quite tight yet, the carpenter says; very little water in her."

"So far so well," said the Captain, "but all depends upon the distance we are from the land. This morning, you know, I calculated as the wind blew that we were about two and forty miles from the Spanish coast, in a direct line. As we are going now we shall run aground some-

where between Pralamos and Ampurias, for the force of the hurricane came from the east and south."

A change was coming over the elements as he spoke; a furious deluge of rain, accompanied with continued peals of thunder took place. Gradually the wind began to lull, and before an hour was out, a ceaseless torrent of rain was the only remains of the tempest, excepting, of course, the sea, which for several hours would remain in a terribly disturbed state. The great danger to be apprehended in the cessation of the hurricane was the "Babet's" getting broadside on to the sea, in her perfectly powerless state.

"We shall have the gale out from the gulf of Lyons before morning," observed Captain O'Loughlin to our hero. "We are in a nice mess. You may manage to get down below, however, and see how our poor passengers get on; they must be awfully frightened."

"Sad loss, our masts," remarked the Midshipman, whilst some of the crew were removing the tarpauling over the companion.

"Faith, it's just what I expected," said O'Loughlin; "look at the hasty way we were fitted out, and yet there was no help for it. In the confusion, we were over-masted, too, and the rigging quite new. I'll venture to say many of the smaller craft foundered in the gale—the heaviest I ever remember,"

The corvette still plunged and rolled tremendously; but, fortunately, they contrived to keep her before the seas, which, owing to the continued and heavy rain, were falling fast.

William Thornton made his way into the principal cabin of the corvette. Nothwithstanding everything had been secured in the best possible manner, many things had broken adrift and lay scattered over the floor; a swinging lamp threw a feeble gleam over the handsome saloon. The females were in their private cabins, but Madame Volney's attendant, a woman who had lived with her many years, and was greatly attached to her, answered our hero's summons at the door.

"Oh, mon Dieu, Monsieur!" said Janette,

"we thought every moment would be our last. Are we going into port, for we appear quieter?"

"We are running in for a port, Mrs. Janette," said William Thornton, "and the hurricane has ceased, so tell the ladies they have nothing further to fear. In an hour or two the sea will be comparatively smooth."

"Is there anyone hurt on board, Mr. Thornton?" enquired Madame, "we heard such a terrible crash during the night, as if the masts were being carried away."

"I am happy to say, madame, that there was no one hurt, but I fear you all suffered a great deal by the rolling of the ship."

"Oh! we fastened ourselves into our berths, and escaped suffering only from intense anxiety, which we are greatly obliged to you for relieving, Mr. Thornton."

The midshipman returned upon deck, the rain still falling heavily, but there was not a breath of wind, though vivid flashes of lightning at intervals threw a bright gleam over the heaving waters, but unaccompanied by thunder.

"In an hour or so it will be daylight, William," said Captain O'Loughlin; "we must try and get up some of the spare sails, luckily our spare spars have escaped. We may rig up a couple of jury masts and get to Gibraltar with them, unless the gale sets in again. I have no faith in those sudden lulls."

"We might make Barcelona or Carthagena, and get a rough fitting up there," said our hero, "it's a deuced long run to Gibraltar."

"Depends on how we get the wind, my lad. Port Mahon would be better if we could manage it. But hark! do you hear that noise aloft, do you feel the change of temperature?"

"There's the nor'-wester aloft, sir," said the first mate, who was standing by the wheel, "it's coming out of the Gulf of Lyons like thunder."

"Be the powers of war! the gale is aloft sure enough," said Captain O'Loughlin; "it will strike us very shortly. Now my lads," turning to the crew, who were splicing the main brace, "let us see what we can do to get up a jury

mast, just to keep us steady before the gale. Faith! here it is and no mistake."

As he spoke there was a loud roar like thunder, and the well known and much dreaded nor'-wester of the Gulf of Lyons was upon them.

It could do them no harm at that time, so in a few moments they were running before a storm nearly equal in violence to the previous gale, and bitterly cold; but Captain O'Lougnlin knew they would run out of that gale in less than twelve hours. The nor'-westers of the Gulf of Lyons, rarely blow a hundred miles out from the gulf, getting less violent, and losing their bitter coldness, as they approach the African or Barbary coast.

As there was nothing to apprehend in running before the gale, and the dawn breaking, and the sky clearing to windward, Captain O'Loughlin insisted upon our hero retiring for a few hours' rest, and getting rid of his soaked garments.

William Thornton felt little inclination to sleep, but he was quite willing to change his

clothes, for he was soaked from head to foot. Nevertheless, as there might be plenty to do during the next twelve hours, he turned in, and before he was well aware of it, was sound asleep. He might have slept about three hours, when he was suddenly aroused by the loud boom of cannon. Jumping up, he was dressed in a few minutes, and hurried on deck, one or two more guns expediting his movements.

To his extreme surprise, he beheld his Commander, and the whole crew of the "Babet," actively engaged dragging a couple of long twelve-pounders aft, and looking in that direction, he beheld a craft of their own size, with only her lower masts standing, and, under her fore course, following them.

Captain O'Loughlin had rigged up a flagstaff, from which floated the flag of Old England. They had got up a jury-mast forward, and some of the crew were bending on a yard a spare topsail. There was not a cloud in the sky, the gale blowing with unmitigated violence, and a

nor'-west sea rapidly rising, though a tremendous swell still ran in from the eastward.

"By all that's lively, William," said Captain O'Loughlin, "we are in for a brush with that fellow after us. He's a privateer, I think; he was close-hauled till he made us out, and then he squared away after us. Now, my lads, steady! His metal is not nearly as heavy as ours; watch the rise," and bang went the twelve-pounder cannonade.

The messenger went through the stranger's fore course; what other damage it did they could not see, but, carrying so much canvass, their pursuer was coming up rapidly—he was then not more than half-a-mile astern.

The decks were now cleared, and every preparation made for action. In spite of their crippled state, they found they could work six of their guns well, and powder and shot were handed up in abundance. With their two cannonades they kept up a tolerably well-directed fire upon the Frenchman, whilst he, with his

bow chasers, returned the compliment, but, as yet, without doing mischief.

The "Babet" was very shortly furnished with sail forward, under which she moved, it soon appeared, nearly as fast as the privateer—for such their pursuer was—and, as she yawed in the sea, they could see she was full of men.

A lucky shot from the "Babet" cut the slings of her fore-yard, not being hung in chains, bringing it down with a crash upon her deck.

"Come, that's a settler for you, Master Crapaud," sung out the gunner; but immediately, their pursuers set their main course without a reef, under which she tore through the water, and in less than half-an-hour it became very evident she would pour a broadside into them. She was a fine, handsome craft, apparently carrying sixteen guns, and well manned. She hoisted the privateer flag, and ranging up alongside, within pistol-shot, poured in a discharge of grape and canister from her eight-pounders, but, from the fury of

the gale, and the tremendous swell, the iron shower passed harmless over the deck of the "Babet."

"Now, my lads," cried Captain O'Loughlin, "we must try and get rid of this troublesome leech, for if this wind lulls, which it will, the further we draw to the southward, he will be too much for us. So bring over two more guns to this side, watch an opportunity when she heels over to port with the swell, and let her have a dose of round shot below her water mark."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the gunner, "we'll do our best to physic her."

In so heavy a gale, and with such a sea running, Captain O'Loughlin knew that the privateer would not attempt to board him, as the destruction of both vessels would ensue; neither could he manœuvre the "Babet" in any other way whatever than to let her go before the wind. If he attempted to get up his spars, he would expose his men to the musketry of the privateer, whose crew appeared to amount to

more than one hundred and twenty. She rolled in the cross sea considerably more than the "Babet," having less beam, and her lower masts and main and mizen yards standing.

The two ships were scarcely pistol-shot from each other, so, watching the opportunity, and the guns being skilfully pointed, the broadside was discharged right into the hull of the privateer, who, rolling over to port, left herself greatly exposed to the iron shower; as she came upright, she again discharged a broadside of grape upon the "Babet," killing one man and wounding three, but not severely. William Thornton was standing anxiously watching the effect of their broadside; he could hear the shot hulling her, and could see that her bulwarks were knocked into splinters, and the next few minutes satisfied the crew of the "Babet" that their broadside had, as their Captain hoped, rid them of their dangerous enemy; for, after a very short time, she altered her course, bracing up on a wind, and heeling over exceedingly, on the opposite tack. This was done

evidently to keep her wounded side out of the water till they plugged the shot-holes, if they could. A loud cheer from the "Babet's" crew testified their satisfaction.

"Be my conscience, William, I think our pills will injure our friend's digestion; she'll have enough to do to keep afloat. One or two of the balls struck very low, and the holes will be hard to get at."

"Yes," returned our hero, "I saw them strike her. We shall gain some hours, and in that time get up our jury-masts; this nor'-wester is only a squall after the deluge of rain. I was down with our poor passengers, who were terribly frightened by the firing; in truth, they have had a poor time of it since we started."

"You may say that, William," said the Captain; "it is to be hoped we have had the worst of it. I have seen land these last ten minutes away there to the south-west—Majorca or Ivica, no doubt."

William Thornton looked in that direction, above the storm-tossed billows, and could dis-

tinctly discover the high land stretching away to the southward.

"It cannot be the main land," he observed, promptly, "for I can make out its termination. No doubt it is Ivica, the smallest of the islands."

"Well, the sooner we get to work the better. You see our friend, the privateer, still keeps on the same tack, with reduced canvass."

Going steadily before the gale, the "Babet," excepting an occasional roll, remained pretty steady, and there were tokens of the gale lulling, so all hands turned to, to get their jury-masts and yards up. The corvette was well supplied with everything in the shape of rigging and sails, an abundance of rope, and some fine spars. They worked unceasingly, speedily rigged a pair of spars, whilst the wind and the sea were rapidly falling. There was not a cloud to be seen—the sun shining as bright and glorious as in the early autumn, though the air was exceedingly keen.

Before sun-set, Ivica was plainly to be seen,

and, in the distance, the other islands; and, so well and energetically did the crew work, that a main and mizen jury-mast were stepped and wedged, and before dark they could set sufficient canvass to permit them to alter their course, and draw off from the land, towards which they had been previously running.

During the evening, both the gale and the sea gradually fell; the night was fine and bright, and the air less cold. Before twelve on the following day, the "Babet" looked like a new-rigged craft, with reduced spars; and, by working all day, and the weather continuing fine, she could set as much sail as a craft half her size; but, being a remarkably fast sailer, she went through the water at a very fair speed, and so satisfied became her commander with her rig, that he resolved to continue his voyage to England under it, giving up his previous intention of putting in to Gibraltar to refit.

Off the Cap de Gatt they had a calm of two days, with the weather warm, so that the females could enjoy air, and a little exercise.

They had quite recovered their sea-sickness, and little Mabel, in anticipating her future meeting with her mother in England, was rapidly increasing in spirits.

She was sitting one beautifully fine evening, the last of the calm, beside William Thornton, gazing over the ship's side at the long line of Spanish coast, not more than two leagues from them, on which the sun was shining brightly, and watching the numerous craft, becalmed, like themselves—some with their lofty latine yards and sails, lying in graceful folds, their crews plying their long sweeps, and creeping gradually along the coast, whilst, lying within a mile of them, were two Spanish gun-boats, or "guarda costa," and, some three leagues seaward, two vessels, evidently frigates, but whether English or French, they could not make out.

"Oh, how different this is, William," exclaimed Mabel, "from the frightful storm of the last few days. How quiet and beautiful this blue sea looks! and how delightful to catch a glimpse of the land, which, do you know, we all thought we should never see again."

"Ah, Mabel, I dare say you were terribly frightened," remarked the Midshipman, thinking it was very possible that the thin, almost haggard-looking, little girl, with her quiet and wonderfully expressive eyes, with the brows so beautifully marked, might turn out a very lovely girl in a few years; "but tell me, dear, now that we have a quiet hour, and our handsome Commander is so busy learning French from Madamoiselle Agatha"——

"Oh, yes," interrupted Mabel, with a smile, "if he is anxious to learn French, dear Agatha is quite as anxious to learn English, and the Captain is so quick,—but what were you going to ask me, William, when I so thoughtlessly interrupted you?"

"Why, to tell me all you remember about your little self, and how you came to lose your poor brother, who was not a native of France, and was too young to be mixed up in the political parties which distracted, and still distract, that unhappy country, France."

"Ah!" replied Mabel, with a sigh, "I was

younger than dear Julian, and yet they would have killed me but for good Monsieur Jean Plessis. When I was very young—too young to remember things well, only mamma has often spoken of that time—we were with mamma's husband, at his chateau far away in France—near the sea coast, in Normandy, I think. That chateau was called Coulancourt, for mamma's husband possessed other estates besides those near Lyons. Ah! I have heard Mamma say we were very happy then. The Duke so loved mamma, and loved us—our own father could not have loved us more. I remember numbers of servants and attendants, and chasseurs, and the great chateau of Coulancourt, with its great trees and lawn before it; but mamma said the troubles were coming over France, and the Duke was called to Paris, and we all went with him. Then, after a time, mamma was persuaded to go with us to Lyons, for Paris became dangerous for Royalists, and Lyons was then a great royal city.

"So we went to Lyons, and there we staid till

the whole country of France became disturbed, and then—ah! shall I ever forget mamma's agony!—Monsieur Plessis arrived from Paris, with the news of the good Duke's death. Oh! how we all cried. My brother Julian was frantic, and wished to go to Paris, but Jean Plessis implored him to stay, telling him that his mother required all his care.

"Monsieur Plessis' wife and little daughter Julia were at the chateau. Dear Julia was only two years older than I; but she was so sensible and so loving, she made me dote upon her, whilst mamma could not bear to be a moment without Madame Plessis.

"We were not long destined to remain in peace. The terrible Collet d'Herbois came to the chateau. I do not know what he said or did, but he made mamma tremble, and Jean Plessis was away in Toulon, where he possessed some property, and before our protector returned, a party of furious Revolutionists, with this wicked d'Herbois at their head, surrounded the chateau, plundered it, drove all our domes-

tics to flight, and carried us all prisoners into Lyons, and lodged us in a frightful prison. Oh! what we suffered from hunger and cold, and want of every kind of necessary! Our cell was damp, and with very little light, and, to make things worse, they took Julian from us. Oh! that was a terrible day.

"Collet d'Herbois came every day, and once, shewing my mamma a paper, said, 'Sign this, and you and your children shall be released.' 'Never wretch, never!' exclaimed mamma, passionately; 'I will die first!' The cruel wretch stamped with fury, saying, 'Die! yes, cursed brood of aristocrats, you shall die!'

"'Oh, my child!' my poor mamma would say, as I hung round her neck, 'that monster wants to be my husband, and to be possessed of all the Duke's lands. I care not for them; I offered him all. But to be his wife—Oh, horror! rather welcome death. But when I think of you and Julian my heart fails.' From that hour," concluded Mabel, "we never saw Julian again," and the tears streamed from her eyes.

The Midshipman pressed his little companion's hand; he soothed her, and then a sudden thought arose that perhaps Julian might still be alive, and he enquired:

"Who told you," dear Mabel, "that your brother was beheaded?"

"The horrid gaoler," returned the little girl, with a shudder; "he came into the cell one morning, and, with a frightful laugh, said, 'So the young Aristocrat's head is off, with fifty others. It was a fine sight.' Mamma was in hysterics for hours."

"And did no one else tell you but that brutal wretch?" again interrogated the Midshipman.

"No, William; but as neither mamma nor Jean Plessis ever heard more of him, it must have been true, for the wicked Democrats cut off all the Royalists' heads they could find in Lyons."

"And yet, Mabel," said our hero, "many circumstances might have occurred to save him. How were you and your mamma rescued?"

"Oh, we lingered a long, long time in that horrid prison, reduced in health, with filthy, bad food and cruel treatment, till at last it was resolved to spare no one in that ill-fated city, not even infants.

"Our savage gaoler at last came for us. 'Come,' said he, with a ferocious laugh, 'you are going to enjoy the fresh air; you will see a grand sight.'"

"Inhuman ruffian!" interrupted William Thornton, passionately.

Mabel gazed up into the flushed face of the Midshipman so earnestly, and with so affectionate an expression, as if she had done wrong in paining him, and he said:

"I was wrong, dear Mabel, to ask you to relate such painful scenes; the very mention of them inflames even me. But you got away from the wretches; God still watched over you."

"Ah, yes, God did save us," replied Mabel, and sent Jean Plessis in time to rescue us. We were brought out, with hundreds of others,

from our vile prison. Oh! how the sun dazzled us, after being so long in the dark cell, without its blessed light. When we could look round, we saw the streets filled with a furious mob. We were forced to walk, and those with us said we were to be tied to trees and shot down by cannon; and the prisoners cried and sobbed, whilst the crowd laughed, and hooted, and jeered us, as Aristocrats. Amidst these insults we were paraded through the streets, till we came to a great square, all in ruins. The houses on all sides were tumbled down, and their furniture tossed about and strewn all over the space—the frightful wretch Collet d'Herbois, had ordered the town to be blown up. I clung to the side of mamma, whose sweet face was turned towards heaven, as she prayed. Indeed, William, I did not think then of death, but of what mamma suffered. And dear mamma thought only of me.

"The horrid gaolers now put us by dozens into a cart. Mamma had her hands tied, but I lay in her arms, almost insensible, though I

could feel her tears rolling down my face and neck, and could hear her sobbing, 'Oh God! spare my last and only one; I am resigned, but in mercy spare her!' I think I was roused then, when I heard those words, and felt her lips pressed to mine, for I cried out, 'No, no, where you go I go.' Then there was a great and terrible shout from the multitude; the soldiers on horseback trampled on the crowd; shrieks and frightful cries filled the air; the cart we were in was surrounded and overturned; there was firing of guns, and then mamma and I were torn from the cart, mantles thrown over us, and we were hurried along without seeing or knowing anything. By and bye—how long I cannot say—our eyes were uncovered—I was in mamma's arms; we were in a boat, and Jean Plessis and another man, stripped of their coats, pulling strongly at the oars.

"We were going down the Rhone—we were saved! We endured a great deal, getting to Toulon, Jean Plessis' native town, and the house he put us in there was his own, for his

father, at one time, was very well off. You know all the rest, dear William; and now do you really think it possible my brother might have been saved? Surely Jean Plessis would have heard of him."

"No, my dear Mabel, perhaps not; because your brother might have still remained in prison, or have been forced to join the Republican army as a soldier, like hundreds of others."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mabel, with enthusiasm, "what happiness would be in store for mamma, if Julian lives."

"Do you remember the Duke, your stepfather, well?" questioned our hero.

"Yes; though for more than two years before his death, he was absent from the chateau."

"And what kind of a man was the Duke, Mabel?"

"Oh, a grand, tall gentleman, with such a kind, gentle look; but he was quite grey—oh, much older than mamma; he looked more like her father than her husband, and he was so kind to

Julian and myself; I loved him as well as if he had been my own father."

"Won't you, William, be rejoiced to see your father and mother, when we get to England," asked Mabel, fixing her expressive eyes on the midshipman, who, for an instant, looked sad. Mabel saw the change in his handsome features at once, and, taking his hand in hers, said softly:

"I fear I have asked a question that pains you; like me, perhaps you have lost a parent?"

"I never had the blessing of seeing, to my remembrance, either father or mother," returned William Thornton. "I was picked up at sea, in a boat, by the crew of a French frigate called the 'Surveillante.'"

"What name did you mention, Master Thornton?" interrupted Madame Volney, who had approached the two young people unobserved; "I thought you mentioned a vessel I remember well."

"I was telling Mabel, Madame," replied the

midshipman, "that I was picked up in a boat when a child, of perhaps two years old, by the crew of the 'Surveillante' frigate. The vessel that my unfortunate parents were in, it is conjectured, had been run down in a gale by that vessel."

"Mon Dieu! how strange and extraordinary," returned Madame Volney, sitting down by the surprised young couple. "My brother was first-lieutenant of the 'Surveillante' at that time, and often has he spoken to me, years afterwards, of that event, and of the child they picked up—the only living thing saved, as they thought. The 'Surveillante' afterwards fought the English frigate the 'Quebec,' and so greatly was the 'Surveillante' injured, that she went ashore on a reef off Isle Dieu."

A breeze of wind suddenly springing up, and taking them aback, put a stop to the conversation becoming so interesting to our hero; but Madame Volney said, as our hero proceeded to fulfil some duty, "We will talk of this again, Master Thornton, for I have something to say that may interest you."

CHAPTER X.

THE springing up of a breeze, and in an adverse direction, with a promise of blowing fresh, disappointed all on board, for they fully expected that with the land wind, usually blowing during the night, the vessel would make good way towards Gibraltar.

However, there was no fear of meeting any of the enemy's cruisers so near that stronghold of Great Britain; but, not being able to make out the two ships of war in the offing, the "Babet" tacked in shore, with the intention of working along the coast.

"How very singular," observed Captain

O'Loughlin, to our hero, as they walked the deck together, "that Madame Volney's brother should happen to command the 'Surveillante' at the time they picked you up. I should not be at all surprised but that you may hear something very important concerning yourself, perhaps even the name of your parents."

"I am greatly excited by the same idea," said the midshipman, "for, though I do not often talk about the circumstance of my birth, yet, in secret, it haunts my mind."

"Faith, William," said the Commander of the 'Babet,' "I never bestowed a thought upon the respected authors of my being until now," and the Captain tried to sigh and look sentimental.

"And why now, old friend?"

"Don't you think me, William, a complete madman to be after letting myself fall over head and ears in love with a French Admiral's daughter?—and I a poor devil of a Lieutenant, worse off than yourself; for, by the powers of war! your father and mother may turn out, as

in fairy tales, prince and princess; whereas mine, if I had any, were honest,—by the bye, that's doubtful!—pains-taking shoemakers."

"Why, what on earth puts that into your head, O'Loughlin?"

"Stop till I light my pipe, and I'll tell you all about it; I enjoy a pipe when I'm spinning a yarn."

"You may," returned our hero, laughing, "but it sadly interrupts the unity of a story."

"Oh, by St. Patrick! never mind the unity; you will make it out, famously; you will have fire and smoke alternately. My first recollection," began the Captain, "is of a Foundling Hospital in the beautiful city of Cork. How old I might be at the time my recollection begins, I can't say—perhaps five or six.

"There were a round dozen of us, some younger and some older, but none beyond ten, for, at ten years of age, they were put out as apprentices. As I told you before, my lad, I never heard who my parents were, and, be my conscience! I don't think any one of my com-

rades were a bit wiser. The treatment we got was none of the best, nor the food neither. When about nine years old, I was told I was to be bound in another year to a shoemaker, as it was very likely my father before me had been one. Why the devil they should think that puzzled me then, uncommonly; for, at that time, I had scarcely worn a shoe to my foot; but I knew I was firmly resolved never to be a shoemaker, or even a cobler, who is a shade higher in rank in my opinion, as they are, like the king, exempt from taxation. I was a stout, active boy, and could write and read well, and was fond of getting hold of a book of any kind. I made up my mind to relieve the establishment of my presence, and one fine evening, just as it grew dark, I managed to hide myself, got out unobserved, and took to my heels, with a remarkably ragged coat, light airy trousers, seeing that they were full of holes, and as poor a pair of shoes to my feet as ever the son of a shoemaker possessed, and they do say they

generally have the worst of those articles of any children.

"You may say with truth that I began the world very humbly, and with remarkably small amount of capital—having just one halfpenny, and that a bad one, in my pocket; but 'a light heart and a thin pair of inexpressibles,'—and mine were thin, God knows—is an old saying; so away I went, light every way, for I had had no supper.

"I got out of the town somehow, for I had never been out of it before, greatly tempted to stop and look at the fine shops, all lighting up so gaily, but I was resolved to get into the country. I knew nothing of the locality, had no idea where I was going or what I was going to do; the only thing that occupied my mind was, that a shoemaker I would not be. My first night was passed under a hedge; luckily it was in the summer months—August, I think —so I was not much worse lodged than usual.

"As soon as I awoke I made a start of it, walked a mile or two along bye-paths, till I came to a small cabin—a labourer's cabin.

The father, mother, and seven children were eating their breakfast—that is, the table was covered with a lot of smoking hot potatoes, and a pile of salt in the middle. The sight made me hungry, so I asked them to let me join them, as I had had neither supper nor breakfast.

"'Bedad, help yourself and welcome,' said the man, and I did.

"In this manner, sleeping under hedges and haystacks, and eating potatoes, whenever I could get them, I travelled for five days, till I was beginning to get foot-sore, when I suddenly beheld the sea, from the top of a hill, with a large town at the foot, and a number of vessels lying alongside of a quay. To my boyish eyes, the sea was a glorious object, and I said to myself, 'I will be a sailor.' I knew what a ship was, and what a sailor was, for I remembered reading a penny 'Robinson Crusoe,' and being in raptures with it, and vowing at the time I would be a sailor. I met a man driving a flock of sheep, and I asked him the name of the town.

"'Bantry,' says he, and I walked on. I thought the sight I viewed from that hill one of the finest I ever saw, and faith I think so still; as I did when years afterwards I stood upon the same spot, having ascended the hill for the very purpose of bringing my boyish recollection more vivid to my mind. I was descending the hill, a good carriage road winding down it, when I heard a post chaise coming rapidly after me. I turned and soon perceived that an accident had happened. The pole chain had snapped, and the carriage, which was a gentleman's, laden with a good deal of luggage, was pressing on the back of one horse and knocking him down, whilst the other was kicking and plunging; and a lady with her head out of the window calling out to the postillion to stop, but you might as well have tried to stop a nor'-wester with a lady's parasol. Just as they reached me, the horse, whose pole chain was broken, fell, the carriage gave a lurch, and over it went on the side next the precipice, the door was burst open and out rolled a little boy scarcely two years old, and with him a

curious woolly dog, a poodle; I did not know its name then. Though stupified and terrified when I saw the child tumble out, the lady's shriek roused me. I rushed over the side, caught the child's garments in one hand, and we rolled down the precipice together some twenty or thirty yards. I luckily grasped a branch of furze just as we were going to topple over the edge of a cliff, full fifty or sixty feet perpendicular, and held on like grim death, still keeping a fast hold of the little boy, the confounded dog sticking to me like a leech, as if it was I that was rolling over the precipice, not his young master, for my special amusement. He bit me two or three times for I could not help myself; if I let go the child he would tumble over the edge, and if I let go the furze we were sure both to go. I looked up and beheld the lady and another female above, screaming and clapping their hands, and a gentleman cautiously groping his way down to where we were.

"'Hold on, my brave boy!' shouted the gentleman in intense anxiety, 'and I'll provide for

you for life;' on he came cautiously. I could not stir, for the weight of the child half hanging over the cliff on my one hand was quite as much as I could bear. At length the gentleman reached us, and holding on by a stout branch of a furze with one hand, he dragged me and my burden up out of danger, and clasping the frightened and crying child in his arms, said: 'God be praised! but for this brave boy I should have lost you, my beloved child,' and he repeatedly kissed the boy till he ceased crying; the lady and her attendant from above anxiously and wildly gazing down on us. The gentleman was in a naval uniform—of course I did not know it was one then—but his gold epaulette on the shoulders and gold lace attracted my gaze.

"'Now, my fine little fellow, let us get back to the road; luckily we have all escaped, and the postillion is gone into Bantry for help and a post chaise.' Well we soon got up, and then the child was embraced and kissed and made much of by the mother, who was very handsome and young. The chaise or carriage lay on its beam

end, that is, it had overturned on its front, so the child was leaning on the door when the accident happened, and its swinging open threw him out.

"'And now my fine little fellow,' said the gentleman, sitting down on one of his own trunks thrown out on the road, 'who are you, and where do you live, for I owe you my child's life?'

"I lives nowhere, sir,' I replied; and determined to tell the truth, I said I was a foundling, and had run away because they wanted to make a shoemaker of me, and that I would rather go to sea.

"'Go to sea!' said the gentleman, his handsome wife standing near us, with her pretty child clasped in her arms, 'by Jove that's just where I am going, and you shall go with me if you like, and I will take care of you, for it appears by your own account that no one has any claim to you.'

"I kissed the gentleman's hand, my heart beating with joy. 'Poor little fellow!' observed

the lady, 'tell me your name?' 'Patrick O'Loughlin,' I replied.

"They both smiled, saying, 'A very fine name, indeed; very likely his father's,' said the gentleman.' 'Don't think I ever had a father, sir,' I replied very quietly.

"'Oh, yes,' said the gentleman, laughing, 'you may be quite satisfied you had both father and mother, though they left you to the care of others. But never mind, my little fellow, I will make a man of you.' Just then we saw the postillion coming up the road and a post chaise following, and one or two helpers, and some of the country people attracted by the account of the accident.

"The pole only of the gentleman's carriage was broken, but he and the lady and servant got up into the chaise. I was told to place myself beside the driver, while the postillion remained behind to set up the broken pole and bring the carriage into Bantry.

"On reaching the inn, there appeared a great commotion in receiving my protector, as all the

inmates of the hotel turned out, and there was no end of donning of hats, and bows and curtseys.

"'Here, my good dame,' called out the gentleman to the landlady, 'take care of this young boy. Let him have anything he wishes for, and send for a tailor and let him make him a couple of suits of clothes, fit for a lad going to sea. I am going on to Glengariff to-morrow, but shall be back in a couple of days, so let the clothes be ready by that time,' and, patting me on the head, and telling me to go with the landlady, he proceeded up stairs with his wife and child.

"'Bless me!' cried the landlady looking at me; I was not very aristocratically clothed certainly, and had lost my cap into the bargain, 'Where did you come from, little boy, I never saw you before? You do not belong to this place, do you?'

"'No, ma'am,' I replied, 'I come from a long way.'

"'There, Peggy,' said the host, 'don't be after bothering the child. What's it to us where

the dickens he comes from, sure his honour, the Captain, told you to give him plenty to eat and drink, and get a tailor to make a suit of clothes for him. The great thing in this world is to obey orders, that is when you are put to no expense, and that you are sure to be paid for executing them. That's the point; and faix, Captain Sir Oscar de Bracy pays like a prince.' "

Our hero started when he heard the name of De Bracy, but remained silent.

" 'Well, many's the order you gives, *avick*,' said the landlady, 'that's never paid for. But come along; what's your name, child?'

" 'Patrick, ma'am.' "

" Well, I'm spinning a fine yarn, William," continued Captain O'Loughlin, knocking his ashes out of his pipe, " but you see, I wanted to shew you how small a thing alters one's destiny in this world. If I had not read Robinson Crusoe I very likely should have been a shoemaker, and if the pole chain of Sir Oscar de Bracy's carriage had not broken, I should never have obtained the rank of a lieutenant in His

Majesty's royal navy. I'm not going to weary you with any more of my story, but sum up, as the lawyers say. Captain Sir Oscar de Bracy's ship, the 'Redoubtable,' sixty-four guns, and three frigates, were at anchor in Bantry Bay. When he returned, after leaving his lady at an estate of his near Glengariff, he took me on board with him and we sailed for Portsmouth, where he put me to a public school, and there I had to fight my way, and found out that my big fist was both father and mother to me, for I pummelled every young urchin's head that cast a slur upon my country or my orphan state. When fourteen I was appointed a midshipman on board the "Concord" frigate, through the interest of Sir Oscar de Bracy, and then, after passing my examination—I may say with *éclat*—I was appointed acting Lieutenant of the same ship, and finally third Lieutenant of the 'Victory.' My kind patron is, however, and has been for years, governor of ——, in the East Indies, and I heard that he lost his wife and little boy in a most melan-

choly manner. From the period of my being put to school in Portsmouth I have never seen him. He took a most affectionate leave of me, told me his lawyer had instructions to provide me with everything, and ample pocket money; and finally, when I passed my examination, Mr. Bodletop, the lawyer, handed me £500, which he said Sir Oscar de Bracy had left directions for him to do, and trusted that I would be an honour to my country and my noble profession. My heart is full of deep and lasting gratitude to that generous-hearted man, and most acutely I feel his deplorable loss of wife and child so shortly after, as it appears, my saving the child's life."

There was a long pause, broken by the Commander saying, as he turned and looked with surprise upon his young comrade, "Why, what the deuce are you thinking of, William; you look taken aback?"

"I did not interrupt you, Patrick," replied our hero thoughtfully, "because your brief history has surprised me, and filled my mind with

vague ideas and thoughts, a gleam of hope, and a confusion of surmises that bewilder me."

"The deuce it does," returned the Commander; "what have I said to bewilder you? Are you in love?"

"No," said the young man with a smile, "but one thing I will observe to you first. You said your protector was called Sir Oscar de Bracy."

"So I say still, William. What then?"

"I will tell you. In the letter written by the Duchess de Coulancourt, directed to the officer, Lieutenant Cooke, you remember, who was in command of the boat that penetrated into Toulon, with Lord Hood's proposals to the Royalists, the Duchess signed herself—I remember it so well—De Coulancourt, née de Bracy; that is, her maiden name was de Bracy."

"By the powers of war! that is singular and extraordinary," said Patrick O'Loughlin, "are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure, Lieutenant Cooke read the letter to me, and I was particularly struck with the

name at the time; therefore it is not at all improbable but that the Duchess of Coulancourt is perhaps a sister, or at least a relation of Sir Oscar de Bracy, for that is far from a common name."

"By Jove! it's very likely," said Captain O'Loughlin with vivacity, "then that dear little girl may be his niece. But that is not all that makes you so thoughtful and serious, William."

"Well, not exactly. Now do not think me an enthusiast, but try and answer me a few questions. Can you remember the year in which you saved the life of Sir Oscar de Bracy's child?"

"Can I remember it, faith I can, my lad. I was then nine years old, I am now going on twenty-four, it was thus rather more than fourteen—perhaps fifteen—years ago. This is '93; that will, as near as I can go to it, make the year of the accident 1778 or '79."

"In the year 1779!" said our hero, his cheek flushing as he spoke, "I was picked up, as I told you, at sea in a long boat. No doubt the

"Surveillante" frigate ran over the vessel my parents, or those who had the care of me, were in, and thus in a strange way I was the only one saved. You will think me crazy, Patrick, but the coincidence is at least singular. You said Lady De Bracy and her child perished in a melancholy way about a year or so after you saved the child, do you know in what way?"

William Thornton felt his arm grasped by the warm hearted O'Loughlin with a nervous hold.

"By Heavens, William!" he exclaimed somewhat agitated, "you raise strange ideas in my own mind, which may account for the marvellous feeling of attachment I from the first felt for you. If your conjectures, for I understand what you mean, turn out correct—and now I recollect, when I enquired of Mr. Bodletop, the lawyer, how Lady De Bracy lost her life, he said she was drowned, she and her child and every soul in a heavy gale, on board the "Spitfire" gun brig, on her passage from Bear Haven to Southampton. God bless me!" continued the Captain, "it's quite possible that the "Spitfire"

was run down by the "Surveillante," the dates correspond; and that you, the boy I have so strangely loved with a brother's affection, may be the child I saved years gone by."

"It's perhaps a wild thought of mine, O'Loughlin," said our hero pressing his friend's hand, "but to-morrow we may hear something that may tend to elucidate the mystery, from Madame Volney, whose brother was first lieutenant of the "Surveillante" at the time she ran down, the ship that I was supposed to belong to; she said she had something of importance to communicate."

"By St. Peter! if you turn out to be the son of my noble protector, to whom I owe everything—my position—all," said Patrick O'Loughlin warmly, "the great desire of my heart will be gratified, for I shall look upon myself as a father to you."

"A young father, O'Loughlin, twenty-four years of age, scarcely seven years older than your son," said our hero. "However, to-morrow, much of this wild dream of mine will vanish or be substantiated."

CHAPTER XI.

TOWARDS sun-set the following day, the "Babet" was within sight of Gibraltar, the wind having shifted during the night to the eastward. The ladies were all on deck anxious for a view of the rock, the bold and noble front of which, approaching from the eastward, is particularly fine, and struck Madame Volney and her daughters with admiration, and Mabel with wonder. They were only three leagues distant, and as Captain O'Loughlin required some few things to complete his jury rig, he resolved to run into the bay for a day, and give his guests an opportunity of landing and seeing the place.

"I promised you yesterday, Mr. Thornton," said Madame Volney, sitting down beside the anxious midshipman, "to give you some particulars concerning the young child saved in the long boat, by the sailors of the "Surveillante." I stated that the frigate—so my brother told me —went ashore on a reef off Isle Dieu, part of the crew became mutinous and got at the spirits. However, as many remained true, the frigate was got off, and anchored, very little damaged, and the next day my brother, who was greatly interested about the child, inquired for him, and was grieved and vexed to hear that in the hurry and confusion of the preceding night, the English prisoners had got away with the jolly boat, and no doubt had taken the child with them. Now my brother was the first person that received the child when handed on board the "Surveillante," and he carried him down in his arms, for he was nearly dead, to the cabin stove, and with the steward's assistance applied restoratives. In stripping him of his wet garments to wrap him in hot blankets, he perceived a small morocco

case fastened round the child's neck, and on opening it, beheld the small miniature of a very handsome man, in a British naval uniform, and and on the back in small gold letters—'Oscar de Bracy!'"

"My God, how extraordinary!" exclaimed the midshipman greatly agitated, and the hand little Mabel was holding nervously pressed hers.

"You suspected this disclosure, Mr. Thornton, I see," said Madame Volney.

"Yes, Madame; I thought and hoped something might lead to this important announcement."

He then briefly related Mr. O'Loughlin's intercourse with Sir Oscar de Bracy, but carefully refrained from stating his friend's early history, merely saying that Sir Oscar de Bracy was Captain O'Loughlin's guardian, and that he had saved his boy's life when a mere child of two years old.

"Providence, my dear Mr. Thornton," observed Madame Volney, much interested, "brings

about and reveals circumstances, apparently wrapped up in impenetrable mystery, in its own good time. I feel quite satisfied you are the child taken out of the long boat by the crew of the "Surveillante," and I greatly regret not having that portrait, which I always carried with me, in my possession. My brother was exceedingly annoyed at the loss of the child, for he had intended questioning one of the English prisoners, who seemed greatly interested in the little boy; but he did not know what to do, for he was from the death of the Captain of the "Surveillante" the next in command, and her situation required her going into port. He therefore took her into Rochefort, and almost immediately after was ordered to Paris. I was there with my family. Alas! there were then symptoms of the terrible times coming. One evening he related to me all the circumstances concerning the child, and gave me the portrait to keep, putting down in a pocket-book everything connected with the event, the date, day, and even hour. Immediately after this he was

ordered on a secret expedition to the West Indies in command of a frigate, and there alas! he died of the yellow fever. When forced to fly from Paris, I had to leave everything behind me in our mansion, and heaven knows what became of all! I saved our jewels, and by a precaution of my deeply lamented husband, a large sum of money was secured for our support in a foreign land. We fled to Toulon, where my husband possessed a fine estate, thinking that the march of the revolution might be checked by the determined loyalty of the Toulon inhabitants and the fleet; but you are aware how affairs turned out."

William Thornton expressed himself very grateful to Madame for her narrative and the interest she expressed, and that he must only rest contented with the state of things as they were, until he could communicate with Sir Oscar de Bracy, if he still lived.

Little Mabel, who had been listening with wrapt attention and watching the changes in the expressive features of our hero, suddenly said:

"Mamma's name was De Bracy, and if you, dear William, are a De Bracy, we must be relations; is it not so?"

"I trust it may prove so, Mabel; such a contingency would make me very happy indeed."

Captain O'Loughlin joined them with the two Miss Volneys, who had been walking the deck with him, for somehow the gallant Captain contrived—whether with his tongue or his eyes we cannot say—to make himself wonderfully agreeable to both those young ladies, and, as he hoped, especially to Mademoiselle Agatha.

When the ladies retired to the cabin the two friends continued to pace the deck, and William Thornton detailed the particulars of Madame Volney's narrative, confirming their conjectures of the previous night.

"From my heart I warmly congratulate you," cried the Irishman, pressing the midshipman's hand, "be my conscience! another thing gladdens my heart as much as any other part of the information you have received, and that is, that you're a countryman of mine. And faith, let

John Bull mimic us, and denounce us in his arrogance as a vulgar and ignorant set without any pretensions to be gentlemen, and all rebels at heart, he is vastly mistaken. There are as loyal hearts in old Ireland and as good blood, too, as any in Britain, and though we may like a row and a drop of whisky now and then, we are always ready to stand up for the flag of Old England, whenever it needs our defence. Now I tell you what we must do; the moment we get to England we must inquire whether Sir Oscar de Bracy has returned to his native land, if not, he must be written to at once, and there is no question, in my opinion, when he hears all the particulars, but that he will with joy and delight own you as his son."

Our hero was so full of conflicting thoughts arising from the recent unexpected revelations, so momentous to him, that he could scarcely reply to questions or attend to his friend's conversation. This singular combination of events, produced by the very simple fact of his being permitted to accompany Lieutenant Cooke in

the expedition to Toulon, had led to the whole; all those with whom he had thus become connected, were linked in a chain of evidence.

"You seem in the clouds, William," remarked O'Loughlin, "and, indeed, there is enough to bewilder a young head like yours; but there's no use in bothering one's brains till the time comes for action. See, we shall run into the bay in a very short time, and, since we are here, I think I will try and get up a better and taunter set of masts, if the Port-Admiral is willing. If we should chance to have a brush or a run with any of the enemy's cruisers on our way home, we should be at a great disadvantage."

An hour afterwards the "Babet" was at anchor. As nothing of any consequence occurred during the forty-eight hours they remained in Gibraltar, and as Mr. O'Loughlin was not allowed a refit, the Commander on the station thinking he was quite in a condition to make the voyage to England, he again got under weigh, having spent a few hours, how-

ever, in escorting his fair guests over the lions of the place.

Two days after leaving Gibraltar, the weather became very bad, so much so, that both the Captain and our hero doubted the power of the "Babet," under her thin rig, to save herself from being blown ashore on the coast of Spain. However, with a slight change in the weather, they safely entered the Bay of Biscay, though, owing to the violence of alternate westerly and northerly gales, much too close in with the French coast for their liking. The weather had been so thick, squally, and bitterly cold up to this time, that the ladies were forced to keep below; and but once, indeed, from the period of leaving Gibraltar, were they able to walk the deck. It was the month of January, and they could expect nothing else. One night the wind fell, but a heavy sea and a thick fog still prevailed—thick as during the two previous days. Just at daybreak a very light breeze sprung up from the nor'-west, and, as the fog lifted a little, our hero,

who was on watch, thought he perceived, as he was looking out over the weather quarter, something dark, that loomed like the hull of a craft, amid the vapour. He called the attention of the quarter-master, who was standing near him, to the object, but the fog again grew dense, and obscured their view; but so satisfied was William that what he had seen was the hull of a vessel, that as they were on dangerous ground, he roused his Commander, who had lain down half-dressed; he jumped up in a moment, knowing how sharp and quick the young midshipman's eyes were, and ascended upon deck. Five minutes afterwards the fog again lifted, and so suddenly that the water was perfectly clear for five hundred yards all round. To the great surprise of all parties, those on board the corvette beheld, within three hundred yards of them, two vessels whose calling there was no mistaking.

The nearest, our hero thought one of the handsomest vessels of her class he had ever seen. She was a long, low, beautifully-shaped craft,

lugger rigged, but with the taunt masts raking like a slaver's. She carried ten four-pounders and several brass swivels, and appeared to be full of men. The other was a schooner, a handsome vessel, and carrying eight guns, probably six-pounders.

Both crowded sail when they beheld the "Babet;" but, as the tricolor was flying at the corvette's peak, and her French build deceived them, they tacked and stood towards them.

"Now, my lads," said Captain O'Loughlin, "we must take those two fellows or sink them. That lugger, I know, can outsail us, therefore the first thing to do is to cripple him; so down with the tricolor, and give him a dose under the bunting—that always wins."

Down went the revolutionary flag, and in its place arose old England's ensign. This proceeding astounded the two strangers. The lugger was the well-known and notorious privateer, "Vengeance," the fastest and most successful of its description, out of any French port —a perfect pest to commerce. This, of course,

was not then known to those on board the "Babet," neither could our hero imagine how much that said lugger would affect his after destiny.

The moment the lugger became aware of the dangerous enemy she was approaching, then she wore, firing her starboard guns at the same time.

But the "Babet" poured in a broadside from her heavy metal that seemed to do considerable mischief; in fact, wounding her main mast so severely that, had there been more wind, it would have gone overboard.

The schooner came boldly up, and, seeing how few men were on board the "Babet" fired a broadside into the corvette, cutting her rigging up and wounding two of the crew. She had also a heavy pivot-gun, which she was preparing to use, loaded with grape.

But, the wind freshening, the crew of the corvette, with a hearty cheer, returned the broadside, at only pistol-shot distance. This action evidently confounded the crew of the

schooner, which at once bore up, whilst a discharge from the larboard side of the "Babet" knocked the main-mast of the lugger over the side.

Again did the crew of the corvette cheer, though, unfortunately, one man was killed, and four wounded, by the broadside. The schooner, however, having her braces and principal rigging shot away, missed stays, and the next minute the "Babet," luffing up, the schooner fell on board her, on her starboard quarter.

"Now then," exclaimed young Thornton, to his favourite top-man, Bill Saunders, who had been purposely selected to accompany the corvette to England; "Now then, let us at them with cutlass and pistol!" and, with a wild hurrah, he sprang into the shrouds of the schooner, and then, cutlass in hand, sprung upon her deck.

Saunders followed, with a daring set of boarders, and, swinging his cutlass round his head, dashed headlong after his favourite. There were nearly fifty men on deck, and the boarders of the corvette were met at first with

desperate obstinacy. But the midshipman was a daring youth, of great activity and strength for his years; he burst through the enemy and reached the Captain, who was furiously urging on his men, swearing he would sink the schooner before he would strike his flag. Seeing young Thornton driving his men forward, he aimed his pistol at his head, but missed him; whilst our hero, drawing one from his belt, fired in return, and the Captain fell dead upon the deck. The mate, uttering a terrible oath, clutched his musket, and, with a blow behind, felled William Thornton beside the Captain, but Bill Saunders drove his cutlass through the mate, and had lifted the midshipman in his arms, just as Captain O'Loughlin, with a dozen men, threw himself on board.

Dispirited and disheartened by the fall of their Captain, and seeing their mate desperately wounded, the crew of the schooner threw down their arms and surrendered.

During this contest on board the schooner, the "Vengeance," in her crippled state, had

kept up a constant fire upon the "Babet," but a dense fog again setting in, accompanied by drizzling rain, shut out all objects around.

"Are you much hurt, William," demanded O'Loughlin, anxiously, of the midshipman, as he sat on the cabin hatch, letting Bill Saunders bind up his wound on the head, with a handkerchief.

"No, nothing of any consequence," replied our hero, rising up, and looking around; "but where is the lugger?"

"To the deuce with the lugger," cried Captain O'Loughlin, "jump on board and pacify the women; they are frightened out of their wits, and have got it into their heads you are killed."

The young man jumped on to the deck of the "Babet," and in another minute was in the cabin. Mabel gave a cry of joy, and the girls, shaking him by the hand, expressed their joy at his safety—hoping that Captain O'Loughlin was unhurt, and, indeed, anxious for the safety of all on board.

"Our gallant Captain is quite safe," replied

our hero, petting his little favourite, who clung to him with sweet affection.

"You have had a terrible fight, Master Thornton," observed Madame Volney, "and you are hurt."

"We certainly had a sharp brush whilst it lasted," said our hero; "but, as to my hurt, it is nothing. O'Loughlin has persuaded me that I am an Irishman, and, consequently, my head is composed of harder material than heads are usually. Now, having proved I am alive, I must leave you, and help my Commander to clear the vessels," and, kissing Mabel, he hurried up on deck.

The schooner was named the "Bon-Citoyen," and had been commanded by the late Victor Chabot, whose brother-in-law was Captain of the "Vengeance." It was a valuable prize; having a large sum of money on board, besides some valuable cargo, previously taken from English ships.

It was finally settled between Captain O'Loughlin and our hero, that the latter should

run the schooner, with ten men, to Plymouth, keeping company with the "Babet" as long as circumstances or weather would permit. Accordingly, after the prisoners had been disposed of, and the dead committed to the deep, Thornton proceeded to bid the females farewell for a time.

This separation annoyed them all. Mabel was in tears, and almost felt inclined to ask to go in the schooner with her friend.

"We shall be alongside all the time, Mabel," observed her young protector, "so keep up your spirits. We shall meet again in England in a couple of days."

The midshipman proceeded on board the prize, taking with him, as his mate, Bill Saunders. There were four killed on board the schooner besides the captain, and nine wounded, including the mate, a man apparently of a brutal and fierce disposition, for though carefully attended and taken to the "Babet,"—he could walk notwithstanding his wound,—he cursed and vowed vengeance the whole time. The vessel was very

little damaged in her spars or sails, her rigging had principally suffered, but a few hours would set all that to rights. Captain O'Loughlin, as the weather was thick, arranged a mode of signals should the fog continue, and he also agreed to fire a gun if he tacked. So shaking hands the friends parted, and in a few minutes, so dense was the fog, they lost sight of each other.

Young Thornton naturally felt very proud of his command, and though he limped a little from the thrust of a boarding pike in the leg, and smarting at times from the blow on the head, he walked the deck of the prize with amazing satisfaction, wishing for Charles Pole as a companion, now that he had lost the kind-hearted cheerful O'Loughlin.

The schooner, after parting from the "Babet," kept close hauled, sailing about six knots; the water was tolerably smooth, but the rain fell in thick drizzling showers. Bill Saunders was taking a turn at the helm, when our hero paused in his walk beside him.

"I wish it would clear, Bill," he observed in a

thoughtful tone, "for though I am steering the course agreed upon, I am not at all satisfied that we shall clear the French coast on this tack. Can you lie no higher?"

"No, sir; her topsail shivers now. It is very thick, and for nearly four days we have not had a glimpse of the land. Where do you say we are, sir?"

"Captain O'Loughlin thought we were somewhere off Isle Dieu, about two or three leagues distant, but I fear we are much nearer. Now if that is the case, and the wind stands as it is, we shall never be able to weather the West Penmarks."

"Suppose as how, sir," said Bill, "if the weather keeps thick like this—and it is thick enough for soup—suppose as how, sir, we makes a long leg seaward."

"I shall certainly do so, Bill, if it keeps on this way. The swell is also very rapidly increasing from the nor'-west, an ugly customer where we are, to say nothing of the chances of meeting privateers and cruisers from Brest. I

wonder where that lugger is now, not far off I dare say. She is a very beautiful craft, certainly the handsomest lugger rigged vessel I ever saw."

"We should have had her also, sir, only for this here fog—darn it."

Towards sunset instead of looking up, the schooner fell off, the wind heading them, and freshening considerably. On sounding several times our hero found he had forty or fifty fathoms; this he knew to be about the soundings close in with Belleisle, a couple of leagues off he ought to have about sixty.

Calling the gunner, he desired him to fire a gun as agreed upon when either vessel should tack. This was done, and all listened thinking it would be returned, but finding no response he ordered the schooner about.

"I do not think the 'Babet' has outsailed us in this light wind," observed our hero to an old and experienced man-of-wars man, who acted as his first mate.

"No, sir; under rigged as the corvette is,

should say this craft would outsail her, and beat her on a wind. Perhaps the Captain tacked and forgot to fire the gun."

"I do not think that," returned our hero. "However we will let her stand on on this board," and having set the watch and taking all necessary precautions he retired to eat his dinner, and have a look at what the cabin contained.

CHAPTER XII.

THE main cabin of the "Bon-Citoyen" was, though not very large, extremely comfortable, and bore a very war-like aspect, the panels and sides all being covered with various small arms arranged in fanciful devices. Young as he was, and a midshipman, Thornton could not help reflecting on the uncertainty of life, when he recollected that a few hours back the cabin had been tenanted by Captain Victor Chabot, in full life and vigor; and now, thought our hero, he lies at the bottom of that vast expanse of ocean that entombs so many thousands. Too

young to be sad or reflect long on serious things, the young commander shaking off the feeling of depression that had for a moment come over him, returned upon deck. The fog was still thick, but the wind was rapidly increasing, and so was the sea. Before midnight they were under a double reefed topsail, and double reefed mainsail and foresail; the schooner was then put about, with her head to the nor' nor'-east.

Our hero was too anxious to retire to rest; he felt too great a responsibility rested upon him, particularly in the then state of the weather, and the ticklish situation in which they were placed. He also felt uneasy at not being answered by the "Babet" when he had fired the gun at sunset, so that altogether he was extremely anxious for daylight. The fog, as the wind increased, was gradually dispersing, and towards morning the mist over the sea had totally disappeared. The gale and sea went on increasing, so that when the day made, all hands on board anxiously scanned the horizon around. As the light increased, land was at once seen on the starboard bow, and

not more than two leagues distant, but a mist hung over the coast, rendering it obscure.

"I am certain the land we see ahead is the West Penmarks, Mr. Lochart," said our hero to the first mate, "and it is very strange I cannot make out the 'Babet' any where, or the lugger. I see a brig standing under close reefed topsails to the sou' west, and three or four other craft under easy canvass running in for the land."

"There is certainly, sir, no 'Babet' to be seen," replied Mr. Lochart, "and it makes me uneasy, for if we had not tacked we should have been unable to weather the land under our starboard bow, and in this gale embayed, we might not have been able to carry sufficient canvass to work out."

William Thornton, if the weather had permitted, would have felt inclined to stand back, and see what could have become of the corvette, it seemed so strange that they should thus have parted company; but his instructions were, under any circumstance, to make the best of his way

to Plymouth, and so, though very unhappy, fearing some accident to the corvette and his little charge, Mabel, thus deserted by him, though far from his intention to do so, he carried on till he made the land out, when he found he was quite correct, as the ranges of rocks he first beheld were the West Penmarks.

Having weathered the land he was able to ease off his tacks, and finally running before the gale, he ran into Plymouth Sound the evening of the second day from parting company with the "Babet."

Leaving him in safety, we must return to discover what became of the corvette and our little heroine, Mabel Arden, who was greatly grieved when she understood that her young protector, being made master of the schooner, the "Bon-Citoyen," they would be separated; but Madame Volney consoled her, by the assurance that the two vessels would be close along-side one another the rest of the voyage.

Although the "Babet" and her prize had lost

sight of each other, owing to the dense fog, both vessels steering the same course, the crews did not expect to be very far asunder when the fog should clear off, and permit them seeing over the water.

Now it unfortunately happened as the wind increased, the men who went aloft to reef the "Babet's" topsail found the fore topmast had been so very badly injured by a ball from the heavy pivot gun of the "Bon-Citoyen," that it required fixing and securing before they could attempt to carry sail up it, and whilst this was doing the "Babet," was kept away a point or two. On a closer examination it was found necessary to shift the spar altogether, and the corvette was then brought on a wind under her fore course, double-reefed main-topsail and driver; thus, as the schooner sailed two feet for her one, by sunset she was out of hearing of her gun. Captain O'Loughlin felt not at all uneasy, for, unfortunately, he did not consider himself so near the land as he was. Thus, they had scarcely

shifted their fore-topmast and got up another when the man forward called out in a loud and alarmed voice:

"Land on the larboard bow."

And the very next instant, the "Babet" struck the ground with considerable force; but the next moment beat over the tail of a bank, and getting stern way on, her commander instantly ordered her anchor to be let go, and her sails to be furled. This was promptly and well executed, and the "Babet" at once rode to her anchor. They were then in five fathoms water. This untoward event occurred about an hour after midnight. So exceedingly thick was the weather, accompanied with a continuous drizzling rain, that even at the short distance they were from the land, it was invisible.

Several of the French prisoners were on deck, and they said without hesitation that the "Babet" had struck on one of the shelving banks on the north-east end of Belleisle, that they were quite aware the vessel would run ashore, but it was no business of theirs; they

were only a few hours out from Belleisle themselves when they fell in with the "Babet." This statement Captain O'Loughlin felt to be truth. After doing all he could to assuage the alarm of the females and set a guard over his prisoners, who appeared inclined to be unruly, he ordered the boat to be lowered, and the second mate and a boat's crew were sent to sound astern of them, but, to their surprise, they came almost immediately upon a rocky shoal, about twenty fathoms from where the ship lay, and finally they discovered she was surrounded with rocks, so much so that it appeared incredible how she got where she was without striking some of them. Where the corvette lay the water was tolerably smooth, though the wind increased rapidly. There was nothing to be done, however, till day-light, for to attempt to extricate her from her extraordinary position at that time was out of the question. They had thirty-four able-bodied prisoners on board, including officers, and fourteen wounded; these Captain O'Loughlin at once determined to put ashore as soon as dawn broke, so that he

might not be hampered in either saving the ship, or defending himself from any enemy that might attack him. He had but thirty-five men able to work the "Babet," including his officers and the surgeon.

As the daylight appeared the fog lifted, the gale increased but shifted a point or two, so that where the vessel lay the wind blew partly off the shore. It was only an hour's ebb when he anchored, so that at low water he touched the ground, but no more, and the swell was very trifling.

Before sun-rise the mist and fog had all disappeared, and anxiously everyone gazed around them; to their surprise, the first thing that caught their sight was their late antagonist, the "Vengeance" lugger, lying at anchor, at the back of a low point, not four hundred yards from them. She was still without her mainmast, but the moment the look-out caught sight of the "Babet," her cable was cut, and in an instant her fore and mizen lug were set, and she was under weigh. Dropping out from under the

land, and getting to a distance, she was hove to, evidently watching the movements of the corvette.

The corvette was not five hundred yards from the shore, and about six miles from the strong town and citadel of Palais, which had some thirty odd years before stood a long siege, and was surrendered to the English on honourable terms, but was given up some few years afterwards.

The "Babet's" situation was in truth critical. On every side were ranges of rocks, all visible at low water, with a narrow gut, through which the vessel singularly enough, had run in. Now to work out through that narrow passage was quite impossible. It was to be done with a leading wind certainly, but the gale, though not direct in, yet would not permit a ship to lead out on one tack, and it blew much too strong to attempt to work through it. Already they could see numbers of persons assembled on the lofty rocks lining the shore. They were just within musket shot of the beach, and Captain O'Loughlin well knew

that a party of soldiers would soon arrive from the citadel of Palais, and open fire upon them from the rocks.

He was, however, determined to get rid of his prisoners, and accordingly landed them six at a time; they were very unruly, and swore vehemently that the "Babet" should never leave that spot in the possession of the English.

Being able now to use all his crew, Captain O'Loughlin resolved to attempt to warp at high water into a berth, from whence he might make sail, but the fates appeared against the "Babet," for just as her Commander was preparing to make his hazardous attempt, the lofty spars of a large ship appeared round the north-east end of Belleisle, and in five minutes more a thirty-six gun frigate, with the tricolour flaunting in the gale, came rapidly into view, and seeing at once the situation of the corvette, taking her for a French ship, she lay to, and commenced hoisting out her boats. As she was doing so, the "Vengeance" ran up along side of her, and then the corvette's real character became known, and im-

mediately one of the boats with a flag of truce pulled in for her.

Captain O'Loughlin was deeply chagrined, resistance was totally out of the question; and added to his great vexation, was the thought that the ladies on board, as well as his friend Thornton's little charge, would fall into the hands of the revolutionary party. Madame Volney and her daughters were in terrible despair; they saw that Captain O'Loughlin suffered intensely, and being unable to express in French what he felt and wished to advise, rendered him even more miserable; but just as the boat had come within hail of the corvette, a gun from the French ship and a signal run up to the mast head, caused them, to the extreme surprise of Captain O'Loughlin, to at once turn back, and lower the flag of truce.

"What's in the wind now?" exclaimed Captain O'Loughlin. "Be the powers of war, Mr. Pearson," addressing his first mate, "there goes the frigate and the lugger, the lugger bang in amongst the Cardinal Rocks, and the frigate

standing right across us. Lie down, quick," he shouted to the men, as he cast a glance round, "she is going to fire."

As he spoke an iron shower passed partly over them, wounding two men, and cutting the "Babet's" rigging in many places into shreds. The next instant she was plunging into the head sea without the island. This seeming mystery was soon explained, for the tall masts of another large ship were seen rounding the point, and soon the sails and hull of an English frigate came into view. A loud and triumphant cheer burst from the crew of the "Babet," and in a moment the English ensign was waving from her mast-head The English frigate was about half a mile from the shore; and as the wind then blew she could lie along the coast of Belleisle, and gain the open sea on rounding the eastern side. She was evidently following the French frigate, and both were seeking the open sea, probably to attack each other, for in the confined space between Belleisle, the Cardinal Rocks, and the banks and

shoals lying off the mouth of the Loire, it would have been impossible, as the wind then blew, to manœuvre two frigates with any degree of safety.

As soon as the English ship beheld the "Babet," a signal was run up at her mast-head, requiring to know her name. This was answered and several other signals followed. Captain O'Loughlin thus learned that the British frigate was the "Iris," thirty-two guns; the French ship the "Citoyenne-Francaise;" but in a quarter of an hour the latter disappeared, standing out to sea on the same tack as the Frenchman.

"Now, my lads," said Captain O'Loughlin, cheerfully, "We must get out of this place as fast as possible, the wind favours us a point or two since morning, so just be quick; splice and knot the rigging, and we will attempt the passage before they can send any troops from Palais to pepper us."

Madame Volney, her daughters, and Mabel, became inspired with fresh hope, when almost on the brink of despair. Having repaired the

rigging, a boat's crew put an anchor in a position that would enable them to set sail, when warped up to it. With his glass, Captain O'Loughlin could discern a body of men coming along the heights, these he supposed to be soldiers from Palais; but the "Babet" was soon warped to her berth, and aided by the shift of wind, she ran safely out under double-reefed topsails, and then tacking, stood out to sea on the same board as the "Iris" frigate,* and three days afterwards, to the intense joy of our hero, and also of all on board the "Babet," she ran into Plymouth alongside the "Bon-Citoyen" schooner.

* The "Iris" afterwards engaged the "Citoyenne-Francaise," and after an obstinate contest, the French ship, her masts standing, got away, and ran into the Bourdeaux river. The "Iris" lost her foremast, main topmast, and mizen; the French frigate had her captain and fifteen officers and seamen killed.

CHAPTER XII.

Sir Godfrey Etherton, eight or ten days after the arrival of the "Babet," in Plymouth, received a letter from Mr. Joseph Stanmore, solicitor. The Baronet was in his study when the letter arrived; he opened it with some surprise and curiosity, for he did not know the writing, and perused the following lines:—

"London: ——— Square,
"January 21st, 1794.

"Sir,—

"I beg to acquaint you with the arrival in London of your niece, Miss Mabel Arden, who is at present residing with a French lady,

the widow of Admiral Volney, a fugitive or emigrant from her native country, and who has kindly taken charge of Miss Arden, for a short period. I have also to state that a young gentleman, an officer in the naval service, has placed in my hands a sealed casket, which he received from Miss Arden's mother, the Duchesse De Coulancourt, with an injunction for it to be opened in his presence and that of Miss Arden's nearest relative, which I understand you are. Any further particulars I will defer till I have the pleasure of seeing you, which I hope will be as soon as may be convenient.

"I have the honour to be,

"Yours most obediently,

"JOSEPH STANMORE."

Sir Godfrey Etherton read this letter twice, and looked very serious, as he muttered half aloud:

"So she is come at last."

He remained thoughtful some time, then rising he proceeded to the drawing-room, where Lady

Etherton and two of her youngest daughters were sitting near a blazing fire.

"I have just received intelligence," commenced the Baronet, "that Miss Arden has arrived in London."

"Oh, indeed!" returned Lady Etherton, whilst the two girls, both very plain, but very fashionably dressed in the ugly style of the period, looked up from their fancy work.

"I wonder what she is like," said Miss Jane to her sister Barbara. "Howard said she was such a puny thing, that she would hardly live to reach England."

"It's very obvious," said her mother, "that she has lived, nevertheless. I suppose, Godfrey, you will have to go to London, and bring her here; the weather is very severe for so long a journey." Even from Southampton to London sixty years ago was called a long journey. Oh, steam and rail, what a different world you have made of it! Who can tell in sixty years more, but that steam and rail will be looked upon as slow coaches are now-a-days?

"Yes," replied Sir Godfrey, handing the letter to his spouse. "I must set out to-morrow. I shall not require you to accompany me, but I will take Jane, to keep the child in countenance and companionship."

"I wonder if her mother still exists," said Lady Etherton.

"Not very likely," answered the Baronet, "in the state France is, that any titled aristocrat would escape, though by birth an Englishwoman. But it's strange that Mrs. Arden or the Duchess De Coulancourt should in a manner confide her child and a valuable casket, no doubt, to the care of a boy."

"And a boy of no family or connection," remarked Lady Etherton, laying down the lawyer's letter.

"That is of very little consequence now," Sir Godfrey replied, and turning to his daughters, said: "You had better, Jane, make some arrangements for to-morrow; I shall leave early so that we may reach London in good time the following day."

The two girls then left the room.

"It has just struck me," remarked the Baronet, "that as this child is, no doubt, totally uneducated, whether it would not be better to place her in some first-rate establishment for the education of young ladies, than to bring her here. For several reasons I think that would be the best plan, as all our girls are finished off, and to bring a governess again into the house would be unpleasant."

"You might do so in the spring," returned Lady Etherton; "but for appearance sake I think she had better come here for a few months. I wonder greatly what is in the casket."

"Some family jewels, I suppose," replied the Baronet; "perhaps some papers to prove the child's birth, &c. But I forgot to mention to you that I saw in the Plymouth paper an account of a spirited action fought by the corvette that brought Miss Arden to England, with two French privateers. She took one, a very large schooner, which it seems was brought to Plymouth by this young midshipman, William Thornton. The

corvette had scarcely half her armament, and it is stated only forty-five men on board at the time. Now, this midshipman has attracted great attention; his gallantry during the action, and the fact of his having shot the Captain of the Privateer, at a critical moment, and also having brought the prize home safely, notwithstanding some tremendous gales, has caused him to be highly spoken of. Even Admiral B—— has taken notice of him, and I think it extremely probable that he will be made a Lieutenant at once, without waiting the expiration of his time."

"Hem, indeed!" returned Lady Etherton with a contemptuous look and manner, "this boy seems to be fortune's favorite,—a lucky chance I suppose. I dare say if Howard had had the opportunity he would have done equally well."

"Of course he would," returned the baronet confidently, "however, Howard shall not want either an opportunity or the means of distinguishing himself, when the time comes. It is very clear every one cannot have the chance

at the same time, or the service would be overrun with young heroes."

"Well," observed the mother, "I am sure, when the time does come, my son will not be behind hand in spirit or ability," and so the conversation ended.

Everything being prepared for a journey, Sir Godfrey Etherton and his daughter Jane took their departure in the family chariot with post horses. A journey from the family mansion to London, in those not very remote days, required nevertheless a whole twenty-four hours. On reaching town our travellers took up their abode at Pierce's hotel. Now Jane Etherton was extremely anxious to see this little Mabel Arden, though she considered her a mere child; still she created a kind of excitement in her mind. Jane Etherton was not a handsome girl, and, we regret to add, by no means an amiable one. About twenty years of age, rather tall and slight in person, and vain and selfish in disposition; whilst her manner was extremely arrogant and overbearing to all she considered her

inferiors, and to those of her own rank and station in life she was stiff and often supercilious. She had heard her mother say that the unexpected turning up of Miss Arden would materially diminish hers and her sister's fortunes, as their father would be obliged to refund a very large sum which Miss Arden, as the daughter of Mr. Granby Arden, would by right inherit. That Sir Godfrey was quite ignorant that his brother had ever married, therefore the unexpected appearance of this little girl was a most disagreeable event.

"But," continued the mother, "we may consider it a most fortunate circumstance that Miss Arden, who had a brother, alone lives to claim the inheritance. Her brother was beheaded, she asserts, somewhere in France, during the convulsions that overthrew the French monarchy, otherwise we should have lost not only the estate but the title."

We cannot vouch for the fact, but it was said that Miss Jane observed that it was a great pity something of the same kind did not happen to

Miss Arden; for it was too bad to have to give up property so long considered their own. We presume, therefore, though Miss Jane was a little curious to see Mabel, she was not prepared to regard or receive her with any very kindly or cousinly feeling.

The day following the arrival of Sir Godfrey Etherton in London, he despatched a note to Mr. Stanmore, the solicitor, appointing an hour on the next day for a meeting. If the time was not convenient he requested the solicitor to name his hour; requesting also to know where he should find Miss Arden.

A polite answer was returned, stating that the time mentioned by the baronet was quite convenient, and that Miss Arden was residing for the time with Madame Volney, who had rented a detached cottage at Brompton, No. 7, East End Terrace.

On consideration, Sir Godfrey deferred visiting Madame Volney till after his interview with Mr. Stanmore, so at the appointed hour he proceeded to the solicitor's residence. The baronet

was shewn into a handsome sitting-room, where he beheld Mr. Stanmore and two gentlemen, to whom the baronet was introduced by the solicitor, first to Lieutenant O'Loughlin and then to William Thornton, saying:

"This is the young midshipman who has acted so kindly and gallantly towards your niece, Miss Arden."

The baronet first bowed politely to Lieutenant O'Loughlin, though wondering why that gentleman should be present, but when face to face with our hero he scarcely bent his head, and the expression of his countenance was haughty if not contemptuous. A careless smile passed over the midshipman's very handsome and prepossessing countenance as he perceived the change of expression in Sir Godfrey's features when introduced to him, but the solicitor, who also marked the change, looked serious.

"I have wished Lieutenant O'Loughlin," said Mr. Stanmore, addressing Sir Godfrey, "to be present at the opening of this casket," directing the baronet's attention to that article lying on

the table, "because Lord Hood mentioned in his letter to me, that considering the youth of Mr. Thornton, he had better be accompanied to London by his friend Lieutenant O'Loughlin, who would have, conjointly with Master Thornton, the care of the casket. Acquainted with this proceeding on the part of Lord Hood, I considered it my duty to secure the presence of Mr. O'Loughlin on the occasion of this meeting."

"I can see no objection," said Sir Godfrey, "but I think Lord Hood might have dispensed with the services of so young a lad as Master Thornton altogether."

This was said in an ungracious tone, and O'Loughlin's cheek flushed, as he retorted rather sharply:

"Faith! Sir Godfrey, perhaps his services in saving mother and daughter's life might equally be dispensed with. As I find—"

The lawyer coughed, fidgetted about, and seeing a dark frown on Sir Godfrey's brow, interrupted the worthy lieutenant, by saying:

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but business is busi-

ness; we will at once open the casket and see to its contents."

Approaching the table he took it up, remarking that it was heavy.

The casket was evidently of Indian workmanship beautifully put together; the sides and edges inlaid with silver, richly engraved with various curious hieroglyphics. A large massive wax seal, bearing the arms of the Duchesse de Coulancourt, covered the key-hole.

"You may perceive, Sir Godfrey," remarked the solicitor, "that this seal is perfect in all its parts."

"Undoubtedly," returned the baronet, "it could not be otherwise in honorable hands."

"I can assure you, Sir Godfrey," said Lieutenant O'Loughlin coldly, "that my gallant young friend perilled his life to preserve that casket, and there was no fear of any one tampering with it whilst under my care."

Sir Godfrey bowed, observing: "It was fortunate his niece had had such able protectors of both her person and her property."

Mr. Stanmore, who did not admire either the tone or the look of the baronet, and who could very well judge of the feelings of the two young men, hastened to break the seal. William Thornton, with a look not particularly conciliating at Sir Godfrey, handed the key, which was of rather curious construction. This the solicitor inserted, turned the lock, and then threw up the lid, all present naturally leaning forward, feeling some little curiosity concerning its contents.

Each naturally expected to behold jewels of great value and diamonds; what they first beheld were shavings. These appeared a rather strange packing material for a rich jewel case; but supposing that the Duchess, in her extremity, could find no other, these were carefully removed, when to their intense mortification, surprise, and indignation, nothing was found but pieces of old worn lead wrapped in pieces of old sacking or canvass. The four spectators remained for several moments gazing at each other, unable to utter a word.

Sir Godfrey Etherton was the first to recover

from the surprise all felt; he started to his feet, his sallow cheek flushed and his eyes glistening with the feeling of unaccountable relief, and even of triumph. What cared he for the poor child thus left penniless?

"Ah," he exclaimed, not trying to conceal the joy he felt, or the triumphant tone of his voice; "so this is the end of our investigation. I thought from the first the whole story was a trumped up one, and that this supposed Duchess of Coulancourt was some artificial adventurer and her daughter."

"Hold, sir, and take care what you say!" interrupted O'Loughlin, the fierce angry flash from his dark eyes telling how strong was the struggle within that hindered him from felling the Baronet his feet, whilst William Thornton could hardly contain himself. "How, Sir Godfrey," continued the Lieutenant, checking his rage, "can you presume to call the Duchess of Coulancourt an adventuress, because this casket, be it how it may, has been tampered with?"

"Sir," returned the Baronet, with a dark

frown, gazing fiercely at the Lieutenant, and his lip trembling with passion, "I am not answerable to you, or any man, for my words; I am, however, responsible for the honour of my family. I was invited here, and I came expecting to receive proofs of a child of my brother's—a lawful child, mind you—born in wedlock—when at the same time I felt fully convinced that my brother never was married, even though my Lord Hood appears to say to the contrary, but who cannot say who his wife was, or whether,—pray hear me to the end, Lieutenant O'Loughlin," continued the Baronet, waving his hand, seeing the angry impatience of the honest sailor; "Lord Hood is depending on reports; I cannot depend on any such foundation. I am quite willing to listen to reason, or to do my duty, provided I am satisfied with the proofs put before me; but you or any one else may depend I will not consent to rob my children of their rightful inheritance, without some substantial evidence of birth, marriage, &c. This young man," continued the Baronet, turning with a look of fierce hatred

towards William. Neither O'Loughlin nor the solicitor interrupted him, waiting patiently till he had ceased speaking. "This young man is introduced into the presence of a female, apparently hiding—from whom—who can say? Seeing how young and inexperienced was the person introduced to her, she declares herself to be a Duchess, thinking this high title would impose—"

"You are going too far, Sir Godfrey Etherton," interrupted William Thornton, losing all patience; his features flushed with excitement as he confronted the Baronet, and their eyes met. "I will not stand here, quiescent, to hear a noble lady and her unfortunate child so grossly maligned and insulted. You have, no doubt, received a false statement of facts from your son, Howard Etherton—"

The Baronet, one of the most excitable and passionate men breathing, lost all control over a temper that had rendered his name one of detestation in the naval service of his country.

"How dare you!" fiercely interrupted Sir Godfrey, stamping on the floor with rage, "you,

the son of a common seaman, dare to accuse my son of giving false statements! You forget, boy, to whom you speak!"

The Baronet felt a grasp upon his shoulder that turned him round face to face with the excited O'Loughlin, whilst poor Mr. Stanmore, a quiet and rather timid man, looked and felt extremely miserable and uneasy.

"Ah," he thought to himself, "these sons of the ocean are terribly fiery; better use the pen than the sword—a much safer weapon!"

"Sir Godfrey Etherton," said the Lieutenant, speaking calmly, though he trembled with passion; "Why I have not felled you to my feet, I cannot say! You are no longer on the quarter-deck of the 'Dauntless,' where your passions found vent upon the victims your anger selected. You here, in your supposed triumph in ousting a poor child out of its parents' heritage, hurl insult upon the head of an unfortunate lady, and dare to call your brother's wife an impostor and an adventuress!"

"I will listen no more to this tirade!" furi-

ously exclaimed the Baronet, seizing his hat; and as he reached the door he turned, and shaking his clenched hand at O'Loughlin, he added: "You shall hear from me, Mr. O'Loughlin; and as to this farce of a niece, I disclaim all relationship, and leave to those who have trumped up this deception the right to make the most of their ill-got-up project." So saying, the Baronet slammed the door after him.

The worthy solicitor leaned back in his chair, exclaiming:

"God bless me, I'm glad he's gone!"

"Faith, so am I," said O'Loughlin, wiping his brow, "for if he had remained only two minutes more he would have vanished through the window!"

"This is too bad," exclaimed William Thornton. "What a heartless, worldly-minded man!"

"Oh, confound him, don't bother about him; we'll defeat him yet, and by Jove, if he only gives me a chance, which I am afraid he will not, I'll make him remember O'Loughlin."

Mr. Stanmore, who began to recover his presence of mind, and his thoughts reverting to the casket, and its strange contents of shavings, rags, and leads, said:

"Now, Lieutenant O'Loughlin, that that peppery Baronet is gone—he quite bewildered me," added the solicitor, "let us think about this strange affair. The poor little girl is now actually left without her natural protectors."

"Natural! do you call them?" replied O'Loughlin, who kept pacing the room to cool himself, whilst William Thornton was examining the casket and the lock. "I call him the most unnatural beast I ever met with; a dead match for a crocodile I once saw on the banks of the Nile, making a breakfast off half-a-dozen of his own progeny."

"But, O'Loughlin," said William Thornton, "there is something very mysterious in all this. I am perfectly convinced that the Duchess de Coulancourt never gave me this casket, knowing it to contain those articles on the table; but,

indeed, Mr. Stanmore, we ought to beg your pardon for thus giving way to our hasty tempers."

"Why, so we ought," said the Lieutenant; "but, tare and ouns, William, was I to stand silently by, hearing that Baronet calling you the son of a—hem—and I knowing you to be the son of Sir Oscar de Bracy."

Mr. Stanmore looked up amazed at hearing William Thornton called the son of Sir Oscar de Bracy; he, however, merely said:

"Let us calmly look into this mysterious affair. I am satisfied myself that the original contents of that casket have been removed, and that rubbish substituted."

O'Loughlin started, saying:

"That is not possible; you saw the seal unbroken."

"Yes, yes," said the solicitor; "there are more ways of opening caskets than with the key," and then he rang the bell, and ordered the servant who answered the summons to tell his housekeeper to send up wine and refreshments.

"Now, I beg you, Mr. Thornton," continued the solicitor, addressing our hero, "I pray you to recall every circumstance that occurred after receiving the casket, for it may be quite possible that the contents might have been extracted previous to your receiving it from her hands."

"No, Mr. Stanmore," returned the midshipman, "not previously, of that I am confident, and I will tell you my reason for being so. When introduced into the chamber where I first saw the Duchess of Coulancourt, and whilst conversing with her, I observed that casket on the table, the lid was up, and though I could not, or indeed thought of trying to inspect the contents, still I can safely say there were no shavings whatever in it. I observed her close the lid, lock it, and then affix the seal, after doing which she gave me the key; therefore, the Duchess could not have been deceived. Whilst conducting Miss Arden through the streets, several ruffians made efforts to get it from me, but they failed."

"Afterwards," enquired Mr. Stanmore, "what did you do with the casket; that is, when you got back to the boats?"

"I still held possession of it," said the midshipman, "till we all got on board the dismasted frigate, where we were to remain for some hours, and where the Commissioners had prepared refreshments for us. Poor Mabel was so fatigued and overcome, that I begged her to lie down in a berth. I placed the casket at the foot of the berth, covered it over, and found it in the same place when we had directions to return to our ships."

"How long, Master Thornton," questioned Mr. Stanmore, "do you think the casket remained in the berth with the little girl."

"Oh! I should say several hours, from three or four o'clock in the day till ten at night, we could not venture to cross the outward harbour till dark. I examined the casket when I took it up, and Mabel said she had not been disturbed by any one."

"Nevertheless," observed Mr. Stanmore rising and ringing the bell, and then taking up the casket he began carefully to examine it, "it is possible it may have been tampered with during those hours. I feel satisfied that shavings and lead were not its original contents, and that those contents could not be changed without hands. I am anxious to investigate the mystery as fully as possible. You see, Lieutenant O'Loughlin, it is beautifully put together, and all the edges clasped with silver plates," and turning it up, he keenly examined the bottom, which had no plate of any kind across it.

"There does not appear the slightest indication of any attempt at opening it," observed the Lieutenant, carefully scrutinizing it.

"I am not so sure of that," said the solicitor; "but I will have a keener eye to examine into this, and one accustomed to these kind of things, and who has often been employed to detect dexterous burglaries. Ah! here is John," and turning to his servant, he desired him to go across the street and request Mr. Robins, the

jeweller, to come to him for a few minutes, and to bring one or two of his spring saws with him.

The two young sailors wondered what Mr. Stanmore expected to find, but the worthy solicitor remarked to William Thornton:

"When on board the frigate in Toulon who did you see there, were there many persons about?"

"No, Mr. Stanmore, there were not; for after the committee men left, there was only the steward, three or four sailors, and about as many convicts or galley slaves, who were at liberty about the ship with only an iron ring round their ankles, but they did not come into the after cabins."

"Ah! here is Mr. Robins," observed Mr. Stanmore as the jeweller entered the room, bowed to the gentlemen present, and at once fixed a remarkably keen pair of grey eyes upon the casket.

"Ah! Mr. Robins," said the solicitor, "I see your eyes are upon this casket," laying his hand on it.

"Yes," replied Mr. Robins, taking it up, "an Indian cabinet or casket beautifully put together, and yet by no means a particularly safe article for holding valuables; for though exquisitely worked and the edges all clasped and riveted, there is no security in the bottoms."

"Ah! so I thought," said Mr. Stanmore, and then he briefly explained how he suspected the contents of the casket to have been stolen, without breaking the seal over the key hole.

"Nothing more easy," remarked the jeweller, "to an expert burglar, with a watch-spring saw—the bottom has been taken out;" and drawing from his pocket a small case, he selected a remarkably fine blade of a knife, and began passing it along the edge or sides till the knife stopped.

"Ah," he continued with a satisfied smile, "I see, a watch-spring saw, exceedingly fine, has been used here to cut the small pins holding the bottom to the sides," and taking one of those instruments he passed it all round, finding only four pins and a powerful cement. He soon freed

the bottom, and then all plainly perceived it had been previously held to the sides by twelve steel pins, which had been all sawed, the contents abstracted and the bottom cleverly replaced, and four very small iron brads used to fasten it, and then cement put along the edges.

"By Jove! that's it," said O'Loughlin, "there's no mistake. This job was done on board that confounded ship whilst Mabel slept."

"Yes," replied Mr. Stanmore excessively chagrined, whilst William Thornton's face flushed with vexation.

"Ah!" remarked the jeweller, "some of those French convicts are most expert burglars."

"No doubt," observed Mr. Stanmore, addressing William Thornton, "you were observed carrying the casket and watched, and whilst the tired little girl slept and you obtained refreshment, the theft was committed."

"If you look at the lead," said Mr. Robins, who had examined it, "you will easily see it is the lead used for ship's scupers, put in to make the weight up. Less than an hour to an expert

hand would complete the job, if provided with a watch-saw and a piece of wax."

Mr. Robins, having partaken of a glass or two of wine, then retired.

"This is a sad misfortune for the little girl," said Mr. Stanmore, feelingly. "I could very well perceive Sir Godfrey was exceedingly rejoiced to get rid of his relationship to Miss Arden. No doubt she has a large claim upon the estate, as Mr. Granby Arden's only child."

"Sir Godfrey Etherton," observed William Thornton, with great bitterness, "may yet be made sorely to repent his almost brutal cruelty to his lawful niece. Besides, it is by no means certain that her brother is dead, and, if he still exists, he will strip this proud and heartless man of both title and fortune. In the mean time, Mr. Stanmore, something must be done for Miss Arden, till her mother, the Duchess of Coulancourt, can get to this country."

"I shall be most happy to assist you in any way, Master Thornton," observed the solicitor.

"Well then, Mr. Stanmore," continued our

hero, "as she cannot remain a burden upon Madame Volney, whose means are limited, I should wish her to be placed in one of the best establishments for young ladies in the vicinity of London, and no pains spared in her education. I can place six hundred pounds prize-money in your hands for that purpose, and I am quite satisfied Madame Volney will pay her every attention till her mother arrives."

"You're a jewel of a boy, by my conscience you are!" exclaimed Lieutenant O'Loughlin, vehemently, and clasping his favourite by the hand, "and, harkee! Mr. Stanmore, I'll place the same sum in your hands, and that will make a clear twelve hundred for the little girl, and last her till, please the Fates! we knock double the amount out of Monsieur Crapeau."

Mr. Stanmore was much moved by the simple, noble conduct of the two sailors; he remarked that he had two daughters at school with a most talented and highly-educated lady, who received only a few pupils, and resided about fifteen miles out of London. By this lady Miss

Arden would have every kindness shown her, and have the very best masters.

"Now, I have a couple of hours' business to transact, but I shall expect you both to dinner, and, after that very necessary daily occupation is over, we shall have full time to settle everything."

The two friends, somewhat reconciled to their mishap in the loss of the contents of the casket, though desperately indignant at Sir Godfrey's conduct, then shook the solicitor heartily by the hand, and departed to pay a visit to the Volneys.

CHAPTER XIII.

THREE years have passed since the events recorded in our last chapter took place, and, at the end of that period, we find our hero, whom we must still style William Thornton, third Lieutenant of the "Diamond" frigate, commanded by his sincere friend Captain Sir Sidney Smith. To add to his pleasure at this appointment, procured through the interest of Lord Hood, his attached friend and companion, Patrick O'Loughlin, was first Lieutenant of the same ship. Our hero had passed his examination with considerable credit. The "Diamond" frigate was ordered to cruise off Brest, in company

with the "Flora" and the "Arethusa." Before we proceed with our story, we will briefly record the events of the three years, so far as they biassed the fortunes of our hero.

Having received the prize-money due to him from the capture of the "Bonne Citoyenne," William Thornton placed it under the control of Mr. Stanmore, for the benefit of Mabel Arden, Lieutenant O'Loughlin insisting on giving a similar sum.

"You shall repay me," said the generous sailor, when our hero remonstrated, "when the little girl becomes your wife, and she regains her rights."

"But, my dear friend," replied our hero, "that event is not likely to occur. I love the dear child as a sister, and will protect her as long as she requires a protector; but I am not at all in love, and certainly a little girl, not quite thirteen, and not very beautiful, is not very likely to create the tender passion such as the fair Agatha inspires in the bosom of my gallant friend."

"Oh! bother about tender passion; wait a bit," said the Lieutenant; "in the mean time let the thing be as we have fixed it, and let us turn your attention to making inquiries about my dear benefactor, Sir Oscar de Bracy."

Mr. Stanmore was made their confidant in this affair also. He listened with great patience, and agreed that it appeared extremely probable that William Thornton was, in fact, Sir Oscar de Bracy's son, at the same time taking down all the dates and names and particulars they both could give him. He then told them they must allow him time—a few days—to make inquiries.

During that period, Mabel Arden had become acquainted with Mr. Stanmore's amiable daughters. Rose, the youngest, was just a year older than Mabel, and, at once, she took a great fancy to her. Mabel was charmed with the kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Stanmore and family. When informed of the conduct of Sir Godfrey Etherton, she only expressed her bitter regret that her dear, kind-hearted brother, William,

should suffer such haughty treatment and indignity on her account. As to the contents of the casket, she was positive her mother had placed in it cases of valuable jewels, and many most important papers; but she still hoped her dear mother would yet arrive, and prove to the cold-hearted Sir Godfrey Etherton that he had cruelly wronged her.

Mrs. Samson's establishment for young ladies, where the Misses Stanmore were to proceed in a few days with Mabel, was situated near Windsor.

Mabel burst into tears when she heard of William Thornton's and Lieutenant O'Loughlin's generosity. She felt their kindness deeply; it made a strong and forcible impression on her most affectionate nature.

Madame Volney and her daughters were most comfortably located, and promised not to lose sight of Mabel, and it was arranged she should spend her holidays alternately with them and the Stanmores.

Agatha Volney had really become attached to

the handsome and generous O'Loughlin. She had studied English so successfully, and he French with such assiduity, that, before they left London, Patrick O'Loughlin declared French to be the most delightful language for making love in in the world.

"I have tried love-making, my boy," he exclaimed to our hero, "in Irish, in English, and without speaking any language at all, but, be the pipers of war! give me French from this night."

"Ah!" replied the midshipman, laughing, "wait till you have a trial in Italian—that's the sweet language for love."

"Oh, bother!" returned the Lieutenant, "I'm settled for life. She's promised to marry me when I'm a post-captain."

"The deuce!" cried our hero, whistling. "Post-captain! Why, O'Loughlin, has the pretty Agatha taken a sudden fancy to grey whiskers?"

"Don't you imagine, my boy," said the Lieutenant, laughing, "that I am going to wait for

that, with this fine, hot war. Wait awhile—we shall go to work directly."

Whilst Mr. Stanmore was making his inquiries concerning Sir Oscar de Bracy, William Thornton set out for a visit to the cottage of his generous and kind-hearted protector, the coxswain, to remain a week with him. He found the old couple hale and hearty. The coxswain felt so proud of his adopted son, and so elated at his conduct during the time he had served with Lord Hood, that he swore roundly he was sure to be an Admiral. The old man also felt intensely anxious concerning Mr. Stanmore's inquiries with respect to our hero's parentage.

He recollected very well, when first he saw the child on the deck of the "Surveillante" frigate, that the men said the boy's name was Oscar. Indeed the child, when questioned, lisped some kind of word like Oscar, but that he considered an outlandish name, and was sure it was not real, but some pet term; it was not ship-shape, so he called him William, after himself.

At the termination of a week, our hero returned to London, having received a letter from Lieutenant O'Loughlin, stating that he had been appointed First Lieutenant of the "Diamond" frigate, commanded by Sir Sidney Smith, who was very anxious to see him in London, and wished him to serve the rest of his time as midshipman with him. This was agreeable tidings to our hero, so, taking an affectionate leave of his early protector, he proceeded to London. Through Lord Hood's interest he got appointed to the "Diamond." Whilst in London he was constantly at Madame Volney's. Mabel was at Mrs. Samson's; no tidings of her mother having reached England had yet been received, which caused much uneasiness to the young man, as well as to his protegée, for he feared some untoward event had baffled Jean Plessis's endeavours to rescue the Duchess.

Mr. Stanmore was at length enabled to give our hero the result of his inquiries respecting Sir Oscar de Bracy.

"It appears," said the solicitor one day,

when our hero was dining with him previous to his departure for Plymouth, where the "Diamond" frigate was stationed; "It appears that Sir Oscar de Bracy is the last of a very old Irish family, who settled in that country about the time of Elizabeth, having conquered by the sword a large tract of territory in the west, and the head of that family was created a Baronet by James the First.

"Since that period, from one cause or another, their fortunes have declined, and the property become divided, so that at present the family of de Bracy is represented only by Sir Oscar, the last male descendant of the Irish de Bracys. He had a sister, who is said to have died abroad when very young. Sir Oscar de Bracy and this sister, it seems, were left orphans, with only a small estate, near Bantry—I think about five hundred a year. The former became a Commander in the navy, and it is said, succeeded to a very large portion of the forfeited estates of the Kerry de Bracys—six or seven thousand a-year, I hear—by the death of a distant kinsman.

Who he married I have not yet learned, now he is Governor of ———, in India; but is shortly expected home.

"I have ascertained, after some difficulty, that Lady de Bracy and her child embarked, with their attendants, in the "Spitfire" gun brig, to proceed to Plymouth, with the intention of going out to India in the "Penelope" frigate. But neither the brig, nor any human being belonging to her, was ever seen or heard of from the time she left Bantry. Now, by comparing dates, there appears to me no question in the world but that the "Spitfire" brig was the vessel run down by the French ship the "Surveillante," and that you are the child saved in the long boat, jolly-boat, or whatever name you sailors give to those affairs. It would be amazingly satisfactory if we had that Lieutenant Volney's written statement, and the picture; but as that is out of the question, I fear, we can only state facts as they are to Sir Oscar, when he arrives in England, and, no doubt, your likeness either to him or your poor

mother, or the proofs we can shew, with old Thornton's statement, added to Madame Volney's, will be quite sufficient to convince your father. Nature will do something."

Such was the substance of the information our hero received. He had only to remain patient, till time, which reconciles most things, should bring him and his father together. He, accordingly, shortly after, proceeded to Plymouth, and joined the "Diamond," and, after three years' more service, he, as we said, passed his examination, and became Third Lieutenant of the "Diamond," and proceeded to cruise off Brest.

The last letters he had received were from Mr. Stanmore, stating that Sir Oscar had stopped, from ill-health, at the Cape; no tidings had been heard of the Duchess, and that Mabel Arden had grown into a lovely girl; that Sir Godfrey Etherton was dangerously ill, and that young Howard Etherton had quitted the service and returned home.

"Now, my lad," said his friend, Lieutenant

O'Loughlin, "what do you say to that? Your little Mabel, whom you had the impudence to call plain, with eyes like a gazelle! Now, you see, she has turned out, what I always prophesied, a lovely girl. I am astonished at you! What's beauty! Faith, now I recollect, you were half in love with that—"

"Come, come, O'Loughlin," interrupted our hero, laughing, "do not think to have it all your own way. Perhaps if I were to give Agatha Volney a little sketch of a certain—"

"I cry quits," said the Lieutenant, with a smile; "but, by the way, Agatha's sister is going to be married shortly to young Lord Stinthorp—a splendid match. Madame Volney fortunately has been left a very handsome legacy by a relation who died out at Cuba, which places her in the position she is entitled to fill."

"I rejoice to hear it, old friend. Where did you get all this intelligence."

"In letters brought out by the "Etna" gunboat. We go out to the Mediterranean before

we return to England, so that it may be some time before we receive news again."

One morning after this conversation, Sir Sidney Smith received orders from Sir John Borlais Warren, who commanded the force, to proceed with the "Diamond" and have a look into Brest harbour. This order aroused the spirits and energies of the frigate's crew, because there was considerable risk in the undertaking. Anything but an inactive life for a British sailor.

The "Diamond" was accordingly disguised as much as possible, so as to resemble a French frigate.

With the wind blowing due east the frigate commenced beating up for the entrance, and as it approached, the crew could perceive three French ships of war also working up to windward. As the day declined, Sir Sidney made up his mind to anchor, so as to be able to take advantage of the next flood tide. The frigate therefore let go her anchor, between Porte St. Matthew and the Bec-du-Rez. Distant

about two miles from them was perceived a large ship, and nearer to the Bec-du-Rez lay a remarkable looking vessel, lugger-rigged.

The moment William Thornton turned his glass upon this last-mentioned vessel, he said aloud:

"By Jove! that's her."

"What is it, Thornton?" enquired Sir Sidney, coming to his side.

"I am sure I know that lugger, Sir Sidney," replied our hero. "The light is fading away fast, still I am positive that vessel is the famous privateer, the 'Vengeance;' the craft we fought when in the 'Babet,' and when we took the 'Bonne-Citoyenne' schooner."

"The deuce it is! I have heard a great deal of that lugger, which seems to defy all our cruisers, and has taken a number of prizes. I wish it were possible to cut her out, but we should then be detected by that man of war close alongside her."

"We should have taken her, sir, the time we were engaged with her and the schooner," said

our hero, "but for the dense fog; as it was we knocked out her main-mast out of her. The crew of the 'Bonne-Citoyenne' said she belongs to Havre, and that there's not a craft afloat can touch her."

"A very vain-glorious boast," said Sir Sidney; "we may chance to catch hold of the fellow some day or other. We must be under weigh by eleven o'clock, for the flood-tide will have made by that time."

"There's another large ship, sir, further up, but she is not distinctly visible, being partly behind the point."

"Oh, we will have a look at her," returned Sir Sidney.

By twelve o'clock the "Diamond" was again under weigh, and, with easy sail, continued working up the noble inlet forming the many harbours designated as Brest. On nearing the ship at anchor, they could make her out to be a ship of the line; still they created no suspicion.

"By my conscience," said O'Loughlin to our

hero, as they paced the deck, "we are making free and easy with the enemy's port; if that big fellow yonder only knew who we were, would'nt it wake him out of his sleep!"

"The very daringness of the thing, our so coolly sailing up into the very heart of this vast port, lulls suspicion," remarked our hero; "for if the slightest idea was entertained, they could blow us out of the water, from the forts on each side."

"We shall pass close to that other frigate, William, at anchor within there; but the ebb will make before we get much further."

"I wish we could just give that lugger a shot, *en passant*," said our hero.

"Ah, mon ami," replied Lieutenant O'Loughlin, "now we have other fish to fry."

The "Diamond" continued under weigh till daylight appeared, and then could be discerned two ships coming through the Geulet (as it is called) de Brest, and in Cameret Road could be counted fifteen small craft at anchor, and a large ship aground on Menow point.

About eight o'clock in the morning, Sir

Sidney, having surveyed all round with his glass, declared that there were no ships of war in Brest road; the "Diamond," therefore, was kept away towards St. Mathieu.

"Now, by Jove!" said Lieutenant O'Loughlin, "will be the tug of war; depend on it we shall be challenged by yonder fort."

"That is the Chateau de Bertheaume," observed our hero, who, an hour before, had been studying the chart of Brest harbour. "Ah! there go the signals."

All hands were on the alert on board the "Diamond," and up went the national colours of France in the frigate. As they stood in, a French corvette, sailing along Bertheaume Bay, seemed not to admire the appearance of the "Diamond," or, at all events, to become suspicious, for several signals were hoisted, and she hauled in close under the Chateau.

The "Diamond" was now compelled to pass within hail of the French line-of-battle ship, which was under jury-masts, yards, and top-masts, but did not appear to have any main-deck guns,

whilst the crew seemed remarkably busy at the pumps, the ship evidently leaking much.

Sir Sidney, who knew Lieutenant Thornton spoke French exceedingly well, desired him to hail, and ask the French Commander if he required assistance. This was done, and the reply was, "No." They said the ship was the "Nestor," which had been dismasted in a gale of wind, and had parted from the fleet twenty-seven days before.

The "Diamond" then crowded all sail, and, notwithstanding her perilous situation, got clear away in broad daylight, and before mid-day joined her consort, the "Arethusa."

This happened in the month of January, and, during the two following months, the "Diamond" and "Arethusa," took several valuable prizes. In one, in the month of March, Lieutenant O'Loughlin was sent to England with despatches, whilst the "Diamond" proceeded to cruise along the French coast.

About the middle of April, Sir Sidney stood in, and came to an anchor in the outer road of

Havre. He was induced to do so from our hero having caught sight, during the previous night, of a large lugger creeping along shore, evidently intending to make Havre.

Lieutenant Thornton fancied that this large lugger might be his old antagonist, the "Vengeance," which belonged to that port; they had heard from the captain of an English brig, some days before, that a French privateer, lugger-rigged, and full of men, had captured a large Sunderland bark, and, after plundering her, had tried to scuttle her; but, seeing an armed brig and two cutters coming up from the westward, had made sail. Luckily, the crew of the bark contrived to stop the leaks, and steered for the nearest port.

It was about an hour after sunrise when the "Diamond" anchored, and at once Lieutenant Thornton made out the lugger at anchor in the inner road.

"Do you think it is the 'Vengeance?'" said the Commander of the "Diamond" to our hero, who was regarding her with his glass.

"I'll swear to her," said the Lieutenant, "she has a new mainmast and main lug, and a new mizen mast, and I know we knocked the old one out and damaged her mizen."

"Then I will cut her out," said Sir Sidney, "to-night. I wish O'Loughlin was here; however, I will take the command of the boats myself, you shall lead with the launch, into which I will put an 18-pounder carronade."*

It is rather an unusual thing for a Commander, on such an occasion, to take the command of the boats, but Sir Sidney had a gallant and daring spirit.

The second Lieutenant was therefore left with the master, who was a most excellent pilot, to take charge of the frigate.

This was an expedition that delighted our young Lieutenant, and excited all on board. Bill Saunders, who followed our hero like a shadow, and who had shipped on board the "Diamond," the moment he heard of Lieutenant Thornton's appointment, was one of the crew of the launch,

* Fact.

and in high glee. Bill was a special favorite with officers and men, for he was not only a first-rate seaman, but always steady and sober, as fond of a lark as a boy, but knew when to enjoy one without infringing on his duty.

There were five boats in all, and in number about fifty-two men, but, excepting the launch, the boats had only muskets. Sir Sidney himself embarked in a two-oared wherry.

It was very little after ten o'clock when the expedition pushed off from the side of the "Diamond." Sir Sidney had in the wherry with him a young midshipman named Beecroft, and in the launch with our hero was another midshipman named Westly Wright. The night was extremely calm, but not very dark, they could see the shores of the Seine on both sides and the lights in the town of Havre.

Sir Sidney led the boats however in the wherry, and having pulled on in regular order till perfectly in sight of the lugger, they all paused till their Commander should fix upon the mode of attack.

"It is a hazardous exploit, Mr. Thornton," said the midshipman sitting beside our hero, "for our Commander to lead in this affair; should anything happen the 'Diamond' is in a precarious position."

"Her master is an able pilot," returned Lieutenant Thornton, "and I trust nothing will happen to our high spirited and most kind-hearted Commander, though I confess I wish there was a breeze if it was ever so light, for the tide is beginning to make up the river."

The wherry rowed up, and Sir Sidney ordered the boats to take a broad sheer between the shore and the lugger, so as to assume the appearance of fishing boats coming out of the harbour.

This they accordingly did; and the ruse succeeded, or what is more probable, a bad look out was kept on board the "Vengeance," but the boats finally made for the object of their attack without any symptoms of their being noticed. Our hero resolved to reserve his fire until the lugger should open upon them They had reached to within pistol shot when a wreath of smoke curled out

from the lugger's side, and a shower of grape passed over the boats, tearing up the water, splintering the side of the launch, and wounding two men.

"Now, my lads," exclaimed our hero, "pepper them; and stand by, Bill Saunders, ready to grapple her."

"Aye, aye, sir; we must not let her go this time."

The next minute they were alongside, and springing upon the deck, boarding her on the quarter, our hero encountered Sir Sidney coming aft, having boarded her from the bow. After a ten minutes' conflict, the lugger's crew surrendered, but the first mate stole forward and with an axe cut the cable. This was not perceived for a moment, till Bill Saunders came running up, saying:

"She's adrift, sir, and fast going towards the shore."

"Then hunt for an anchor and let go, Bill," cried the young lieutenant, going aft to speak to Sir Sidney, who was talking to the Captain,

Auguste Baptiste Gaudet, a tall powerful man with a remarkably repulsive countenance.

"This gentleman," said Sir Sidney, laying his hand on our hero's arm, and little thinking how destructive and dangerous those words would prove to his officer; "this gentleman very nearly captured you once before, when you lost your main mast."

"Sacre dieu—what!" exclaimed the privateer Captain, "was it Monsieur who took the 'Bonne Citoyenne?'"

"Yes," returned Sir Sidney, "and shot her Captain also."

"Sacre diable!" muttered the Captain with a savage scowl, which neither our hero nor Sir Sidney saw or noticed, for both were anxiously regarding their then critical situation.

"I shall return on board the 'Diamond,'" said Sir Sidney; "do you order the boats ahead, and set all the sail you can on the lugger, put the prisoners into the boats and send them ashore at Harfleur."

"There's not an anchor in the craft," said

Bill Saunders to our hero, after Sir Sidney had left.

But just then one of the men shouted out that they had found a small kedge, which was accordingly let go, when they discovered that neither the boats ahead nor the sails would move the lugger against the strong flood tide making up the river Seine. Day was approaching, when Lieutenant Thornton perceived that the lugger had dragged, and that at last she had brought up, two miles higher up than the town of Havre, nearly abreast of Harfleur. The launch, after landing the prisoners, had pulled back to the "Diamond," and Sir Sidney Smith perceiving, as the daylight made, several vessels coming out of Havre to attack and retake the lugger, gallantly pulled back to her assistance, resolved to defend her to the last; a most spirited determination, but an unfortunate one, as will be seen in our next chapter.

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